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Rural People at Worship

By

EDWARD KRUSEN ZIEGLER

AGRICULTURAL MISSIONS, INC.
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

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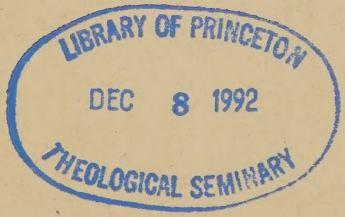

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PREFACE

THIS is a book of worship materials and programs collected from the rural areas of the world. After the publication of "A Book of Worship for Village Churches," in 1939, it became evident that there is great need for collecting materials which are being used and developed in rural churches, as a contribution to the ecumenical movement in worship, and as a means of stimulating the development of more distinctive rural worship. This book is a step in meeting that need.

Letters asking for indigenous rural worship materials were sent out in the summers of 1940 and 1941 to rural church leaders, pastors, and missionaries all over the world, through the mailing list and facilities of Agricultural Missions, Inc., of New York. The increased burdens laid upon missionaries and church leaders by the war, and the increasing difficulty of international communication prevented the sending of as much valuable material as was desired.

The author owes, however, a deep debt of gratitude to the hundreds of missionaries, pastors, teachers, authors, and missionary executives in many lands who graciously assisted him by sending materials, programs, etc. Not nearly all of this material can be used within the compass of a book cheap enough to have the wide circulation for which this book is planned. Thanks are also due to those who have translated materials from several languages into English.

The author's debt to Mr. John H. Reisner, executive secretary of Agricultural Missions, Inc., and of the Christian Rural Fellowship, for encouragement, inspiration, and help given without stint, and in countless ways, both in preparation and publication of the book, is beyond computation.

The author wishes to thank all owners and publishers of copyrighted materials who have so graciously given permission for the use of their work in preparation of this book. He has tried to

give proper credit for all materials used, both copyrighted and uncopyrighted; if any such acknowledgment has been inadvertently omitted, he will try to make restitution. Permission to quote from the American Standard Version of the Bible has been granted by the International Council of Religious Education, who hold the copyright.

A debt of gratitude is owed by the author to a number of others who have greatly helped in preparing the book: especially to Miss Marguerite Hull, Mrs. Margaret L. Dotterer, and Mrs. Esther H. Eichelberger, who helped in many ways and gave freely of their time and skill in preparing the materials and typing the manuscript.

Finally the author's deepest gratitude is expressed to his wife, Ilda Bittinger Ziegler, whose constant counsel and priceless inspiration has been the greatest source of encouragement in this work for the rural churches of the world.

EDWARD K. ZIEGLER

September, 1943.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

It has been an extraordinary privilege to collaborate with Mr. Ziegler in making Rural People at Worship available to those devoted to the cause of the village and rural church and to the religious interests of rural life around the world. It is a logical and worthy companion volume to his earlier *A Book of Worship for Village Churches* published in 1939 and to his *Country Altars* published in 1942 by the Commission on Worship of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. We are again greatly indebted to him for this further notable contribution to rural worship.

Whereas *A Book of Worship for Village Churches* was written primarily for the village church in India and *Country Altars* was written primarily for the rural church in America, Rural People at Worship was written with the whole world in mind as a contribution to the growing ecumenical movement. It will be a day of great rejoicing when the rural people of the world can be united in worship that sanctifies their daily toil and life and can realize their sense of divine calling in a common vocation. This book will hasten these processes.

As Mr. Ziegler points out, there are still a great many gaps to be filled. This volume should be only the beginning of a series of editions progressively published to make available to the rural church across the world the worship materials which will continue to be developed by the people of many different cultures and backgrounds. We hope, therefore, that rural worship materials will continue to be sent to us for future use. Further editions will depend primarily on the cooperation of many friends in many lands.

At the request of Mr. Ziegler, Agricultural Missions, Inc., has copyrighted the book. Permission to translate and publish will be freely granted to missionaries and religious bodies upon written application. It is the earnest wish of both author and publisher

that Rural People at Worship make the greatest possible contribution to the enrichment of the life of rural people everywhere.

John H. Reisner, *Executive Secretary*
Agricultural Missions, Inc.
156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

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INTRODUCTION

New Paths to the Presence of God

THE vision of the Seer of Patmos, of "A great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne . . . and with a great voice saying, 'Salvation to our God!' ", does not wait for its fulfillment until some dimly seen apocalyptic event. It is being fulfilled now! Even in these years of war, when friendships between nations have vanished into the dim mists of barbarism, when commerce and trade, the communication of thought and the sharing of culture are greatly retarded, the Church of Christ across the world is still witnessing, often under the Cross, to the universal nature of the Christian faith, by its worship of God in Christ. There is scarcely a land on the face of the earth where Christian worship is not being offered today, in the language and thought forms, and according to the customs of the people of the land.

Across the rural sections of war-ravaged Europe, the myriad villages of sunny India, the millennium-old communities of China, among the islands of the Pacific, under the shadow of Fujiyama or the high Sierras, across the hills and prairie lands of rural America, the forests and plateaus and pampas of South America, across the vast reaches of grassland and forest in Africa, rural people are restoring their souls, finding forgiveness, peace and power, and building their communities together through the ties of strong Christian fellowship as they engage in Christian worship. They are finding God, and through Him new richness and beauty in their life as men and women of the soil.

One of the most gratifying marks of the progress of the Christian movement in every land is the increasing utilization of the treasures of the art and culture of the land in the service of God through worship. The Bantu or the Indian or Chinese Christian is no longer a darker-skinned copy of the white Christian. He is now a world Christian, with ties of brotherhood binding him to

the peoples who also serve the Christ in other lands, ties which war has been powerless to dissolve. But he brings into the treasury of the world-wide Church of Christ the glory and honor of his own nation, the skills, the crafts and the arts which are native to him. He does this not in nationalistic pride, or in derogation of the gifts of others, but in the true Christian spirit of bringing all his finest treasures and laying them at the feet of the Redeemer to be used.

He feels most at home in the Christian fellowship when he is surrounded by familiar things, and when he can express his adoration and give voice to his prayers in his own language. He can worship best when the place of worship represents the best which his own hands can build, using the materials and the architectural style of his own land. As the impulse to express Christian life and experience through the medium of pictures surges in his heart, he paints Chinese Madonnas, African Peters and Pauls, a Christ of the Indian road. The symbols through which he seeks to express graphically and beautifully the great religious ideas are not all the product of the historic European Church; embedded in his own cultural heritage are symbols which lift his soul into the presence of the Eternal, and of ultimate realities, and these are used to bring new and rich expression, too, to his Christian faith.

Probably there is no area in which this trend is more clearly discerned than in religious expression through music. Music and rhythmic expression are probably more widely used than any other arts among rural peoples. Folk-songs and folk-dances are most highly developed among country people, and constitute among them the most common form of artistic expression. Each land and people has its own rich forms of musical expression, and its own instruments.

Music has always played a prominent part in Christian worship. Wherever the church has gone with attractiveness and power, it has gone as a singing church. In many places where missions have gone, the missionaries, in guiding new Christians into the rich experience of Christian worship, have translated the hymns of their own native lands, and often have tried to use the tradi-

tional tunes also. Most of the converts in many lands have been from among people who had little understanding of and appreciation for their own native musical arts. The folk-songs and dances which they knew best were often surrounded by a cloud of unwholesome associations which made their adaptation for Christian worship seem undesirable. Now a great change is taking place. The Christian nationals in every land are becoming more aware of the great treasures of the music of their own lands, and finding ways to use it in the service of Christ. They are baptizing the folk tunes, and today in most churches, the heart of the rural Christian throbs with joy and praise, and all the other emotions of Christian worship, stirred by his own tunes and his own instruments.

Christian preachers and teachers and farmers are finding that they can make beautiful, singable Christian lyrics, using the rich thought forms and imagery of their own rural life, and singing them to their folk-tunes, and even using the old folk-dances, too, to give expression to the upsurging of the new life they have found. The Christian faith, they are finding, can be expressed with eloquence and beauty, and great attractive power in the musical language which farmer people can love, appreciate, and understand. In India, the ancient forms of dramatic music such as the *kalapshepam,*[1] the *katha,*[2] and the *kirtan,*[3] which are so well known and loved there are now becoming the vehicles for expressing Christian faith and life, as well as the simpler folk-forms of music such as the *bhajan*[4] and the *garbo.*[5] The Christian faith has become a singing faith, and its musical expression is one of the finest ways of helping to get its roots firmly and deeply into the soil of each land.

There comes to mind the unforgettable picture of Laxman Kevaldas, an Indian farmer-preacher with a beautiful lyric tenor voice, who was a friend of the author. He would go into a village at sunset, talk with the farmer people whom he met, and then invite them to a meeting out under a great banyan or tamarind

1, 2, 3 These are forms of dramatic music used in various sections of India to tell some ancient, often religious story. They may be thought of in some cases as "one-man operas," or oratorios.

4 A single musical composition, nearest equivalent to a hymn.

5 A song and folk-dance combined, always performed by women.

tree. Hundreds of tired farmers and their wives and sleepy little children would sit on the ground around him, and using a simple one-string guitar which he had made, he would sing the Christian message in lovely stories in song, in the ancient lyric forms which they have always loved. Spellbound, they would listen until the moon hung low in the skies, and the after-midnight chill drove them indoors for their rest. Christ walked the village roads of India in the song of His minister, and He spoke in language which made the bells ring in country people's hearts.

Not least among the ways by which Christian faith is finding native expression are prayers and worship forms. Beautiful prayers expressed in the thought forms of the people themselves, have been collected in Daniel J. Fleming's beautiful "The World at One in Prayer." Not only in prayer, but in the creation and celebration of Christian festivals rooted in the soil of the lands of the younger churches, and in bringing their own thought and customs into the celebration of the historic occasions of worship, this vigorous, springing life may be seen. To the celebration of Christmas and All-Saints' Day, in the development of Christian festivals of rural life, the rural people of the world have brought to Christ their choicest gifts.

As we read this collection of services and even more as we use them as pathways of worship ourselves, we will find new richness and beauty, along pathways to the presence of God hitherto untrod. We will find spiritual assets and treasures in the worship experiences of other races which will give us new confidence in the maturity and vigor of the Christian churches in Asia, Africa, Europe, and rural America. Our horizons will be moved back in worship experience, and our appreciation of other peoples in the Kingdom of God will deepen.

Worship is the highest expression of the Christian faith. When to its practice the rural people of the world bring their treasures, their skills, their music and art and culture, the worship of the world-wide church is thereby enriched. As we enter into these experiences of worship alone or in groups, we will catch a fresh vision of the truly ecumenical church, in which our brothers of every land and color are making their distinctive contribution.

We can enter the Holy of Holies into the presence of Him Who inhabiteth eternity, arm in arm with a great host of farmer people of every land who are walking the country roads with Christ.

The materials brought together in this book illustrate another trend of great significance to the rural church of tomorrow. Here we see Christian worship tied up intimately with many of the experiences of daily life in the countryside. The building of a home, the planting of a tree, seed-time and harvest, the coming of rain, as well as the more formal religious occasions, all have called forth worship expression. These services of occasional worship will do much to permeate daily life among rural people with Christian significance. Christians who enter into this wider experience of worship will no longer secularize rural life. There is a rising tide of appreciation of the hand of God in all the concerns and processes of agriculture. There is, too, in these worship services, a growing sense of Christian stewardship of the holy earth and its resources and gifts, a stewardship lifted up and motivated by worship. There could be no more powerful guarantee and motivation of the continued growth and maturing of that sense of stewardship than worship celebration of it.

It will readily be seen that there are still many gaps to be filled in this developing worship consciousness in rural life. The movement is just beginning. When it reaches flood-tide, there will be a rich outpouring of the treasures of every people in worship experience coupled with a permeation of every aspect and concern of rural life with a new sense of stewardship and of the presence and action of God. In our inquiries, some of the significant gaps were in the field of celebration of the historic Christian festivals of Easter and Christmas and Pentecost; in adaptation of marriage customs to the uses of the Christian church. Easter is being celebrated, it is true; but most of the services which came to light in the course of the study were almost entirely traditional, and contained no significant elements either of native culture or of distinctively rural flavor.

An interesting chapter might have been written describing significant minor adaptations in worship. Many local customs and articles are being used in worship which came to light incidentally

in our study. The use of flowers in India, leaving shoes and sandals outside and entering the sanctuary with bare feet, customs having to do with the dress of the celebrant of worship or the worshippers, forms of greeting and salutation which added to the solemnity and dignity of worship experience, processions, the use of flags and pennants, characteristic and time-honored postures for worship, and many other little details which show the process of naturalization of worship experience among many races and peoples, all are significant marks of the trend.

As we look to the future, there are several interesting leads which should be followed, and certain developments which are full of great promise. In the first place, the movement to utilize more of native cultural heritage, in art forms, poetic expression, and music, will bring an ever-broadening stream of rich treasure into the storehouse of Christian worship materials, for the use of the whole world. As the younger churches mature, they depend less and less upon Western forms of Christianity, and use with more creative insight and boldness, and with incalculable benefit to the world-wide church, the arts and thought-forms of their own lands and peoples. In the second place, the rich well-springs of Christian song are just being opened. We may confidently look for great enrichment of the church's hymnody as the various peoples of the world make the contribution which they can make so well. The time is here when a good hymnal should include hymns from Africa, from India and China, as well as the traditional hymns from the older countries of the church. Further, real rural life hymns will be sung more and more. There is an increasing treasury of them. Folk song and dance will become more and more a handmaiden of the Christian church in the worship of God.

One of the areas needing most thought and creative experimentation is the development of adequate celebration of all the processes and experiences of rural life in Christian worship. The festival spirit is strong and can be a great asset in the Kingdom of God. Why should it not bring together the seasonal occasions of gladness with the spirit of thanksgiving and the experience of richer communion with God. The greater development of Chris-

tian rural life festivals will make the Christian religion even more attractive and effective among the rural peoples of the world.

There are many leaders of rural churches in all lands who feel keenly the need for more courageous pioneering in these fields. The Indian Bishop of Dornakal, for one, has issued one call after another for vigorous thinking and bold experiment on the part of the clergy, to Indianize the accompaniments and vehicles of worship. In *Worship in Other Lands* by H. P. Thompson, the Bishop is quoted as follows:

> There is as yet not a village church that has in any way adapted and adopted the indigenous temple architecture. Apart from that, in the midst of a people with high aesthetic tastes and love of refined art, what a tragedy it is often to see our places of worship bereft of all beauty, colour or decoration! There is not a Telugu village or town where beautiful and intricate designs of *muggu*[1] may not be seen any early morning, traced in front of houses and temples. There is not a house in this country where flowers—natural and artificial—do not decorate the persons and homes of the people. There is not a large village that is not accustomed to all-night entertainments given by travelling musicians and performers of *harikathas*,[2] and not a homestead that has not had a prettily decorated *pamdal*[3] for its wedding ceremonial and festivities. All these ought to be consecrated and brought into the service of the Kingdom.[4]

There is need, finally, for greatly increased sharing of the treasures of worship experience around the rural world, the Christians of every land bringing their gifts into the common treasury of Christendom. We shall find that there are many new trails to the highlands of the spirit of God, which have been blazed by farmer folk in Java and Kenya, in Nevada and Ecuador, and China and India, along which, please God, many other rural folk around the world, may come, too, into the country of God.

1 Floral or geometrical designs in colored chalk powder on clean-swept ground in front of an Indian home; often used for decoration on festal occasions.
2 Musical performance of religious drama.
3 Booth of bamboo or plantain, used for ceremonial occasions.
4 From *Worship in Other Lands*, by H. P. Thompson. S.P.G., London. Used by permission of the publishers.

CHAPTER I

PLANTING FESTIVALS

Blessing of the Seed
A Dedicatory Service for Plowing and Planting
Dedicating Land and Hand in Angola
Seed-Time Service of Worship
Planting Festival

THESE *dramatic services suggest one of the most promising ways of tying up worship with the daily processes of agricultural life. At least two of them are given in sufficient detail to make them usable anywhere, and all are worthy of careful study. The time of sowing is one of the most stimulating occasions for genuine worship experience.*

Blessing of the Seed

From *Mone Fe's Visits.* The description of the service was originally published in *Listen!,* the Christian magazine for Africa.

¶ All the people, men, women, and children, came to the church, bearing their seed and their hoes, and they laid them in a great heap on the church floor.

Then the teacher held up each kind of seed and he sang, Seed we bring, and he named each kind, and there were many; and the people answered, Lord, to Thee; wilt Thou bless them, O Lord.

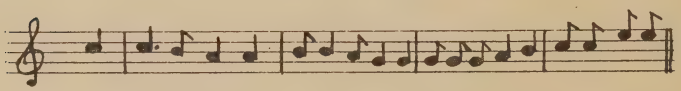
And the teacher lifted a hoe and sang, Hoes we bring, and all the people made answer, Lord, to Thee; wilt Thou bless them, O Lord.

The teacher raised his hands and sang, Hands we bring, and all the people raised their hands and sang, Lord, to Thee; wilt Thou bless them, O Lord.

Ourselves we bring, sang the teacher, and the people bowed their heads and sang very softly, Lord, to Thee; wilt Thou bless us, O Lord.

All sang these words in their own tongue, which is Tswa.

This is the tune of the hymn they sang:



Leader: Seed we bring
Tim-be-wu-ha ne-ha,

All: Lord, to Thee; wilt Thou bless them, O Lord!
Hosi ka we-na nga u hi ka-te-ki-so Ho-si

Leader: Seed we bring, *All:* Lord, to Thee, etc.
Leader: Hoes we bring, *All:* Lord, to Thee, etc.
Leader: Hands we bring, *All:* Lord, to Thee, etc.
Leader: Ourselves we bring, *All:* Lord, to Thee, etc.

Then the teacher prayed to God in these words: O God, our Father, Thy children greatly thank Thee for the good seed which Thou hast given us. We greatly wonder at the power there is in the seed. We honour Thy gift. We plant our seed in faith, asking Thee to bless it in the ground. Give it life. May no evil thing spoil our seed as it grows and bears fruit. Remember, we pray Thee, the many people of our village who look to Thee for Food. May none hunger in our town. Look with Thy fatherly eye upon all people everywhere, and give them this day their daily bread, for Jesus' sake. *Amen.*

The headman said to Mone Fe: God be thanked for the things of life which have come to the people of Mubi through you and this young man, our teacher.

And the elders and the people clapped their hands and said, God be thanked.

A Dedicatory Service for Plowing and Planting

This service was prepared by Rev. H. A. Stick, head of the Theological Department of Adams College, Natal, South Africa, and used in the Zulu Church.

¶ The service should be announced in advance and the people advised to bring to the service various kinds of seed. Let the pastor proceed with the customary service of worship, for responsive reading taking Psalm 24, for Scripture reading choosing one of the chapters indicated below. The text of the sermon for the day may also be chosen from these chapters. After the sermon let the service proceed as follows:

Pastor: The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein.

People: We thank Thee, Lord.

Pastor: For the rich earth, for the seed we possess, for cattle and plows with which to work,

People: We thank Thee, Lord.

Pastor: For agriculturists who teach us, for diligent hearts, and for strength to labor,

People: We thank Thee, Lord.

Pastor: For sunshine, rain and dew, and for thy hand which blesses,

People: We thank Thee, Lord.

Pastor: For a peace that gives us liberty, for friendly neighbors, for servants and children who help us,

People: We thank Thee, Lord.

Pastor: For the past harvest, which we remember and which is still nourishing us, for the hope of a new harvest to come,

People: We thank Thee, Lord.

All: The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein. We thank Thee, Lord.

¶ All who have come with seeds, let them stand; let the pastor pray for the earth, the seed, and the people who plow. Then let those who have seeds come forward; let the pastor receive the seed and again return it to the owner, until all have passed and returned to their places. If the church has a church field, God's acre, let the people leave some of the seed with the pastor for use in this field and let him bless it by itself. If an agricultural demonstrator is present, let him speak to the people. If there is none, then invite a teacher or some good farmer of the community to speak.

Hymn

Benediction: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you peace, and diligence in cultivating the soil, and bless you with sunshine and rain and dew, and prosper you that you may not be in want, and satisfy especially your hearts with heavenly food that you may appear at the time of the great harvest before His throne of glory, forever and ever. *Amen.*

Suggestive passages of Scripture for use in this service: Gen. 1: 1 & 31, 11–12; 8: 22; 41: 47, 48, 53–57; Deut. 28: 1–6; Ps. 126: 5, 6; Prov. 6: 6–11; Hosea 10: 12; Matt. 6: 25–34; 13: 3–9, 18–23; Mark 4: 30–32; II Cor. 9: 10.

Dedicating Land and Hand in Angola

Putting New Christian Content into Old Religious Practices

Because it gives the background of primitive religious ceremony as well as the Christian adaptation, in clear and graphic language, Miss Kate Rutherford's account of the planting festival at Lutamo, Angola, Africa, is given here in full, as she wrote it for the Mimeograph Series of Agricultural Missions, Inc., by whose courtesy it is here included.

¶ Inspired by two articles dealing with Christian ceremonies of the land printed in the *Agricultural Missions Notes,* we planned to have a special service at Lutamo before the people should start preparing their fields for the annual corn and bean crops. It is a custom among the Ovimbundu people that on the first day rain falls after the long dry season, no one should go to work. They think that the first rain is the one which brings good or bad crops. The next day no one works, and the elders pray to their ancestors, at their own family altars, bringing baskets of seed corn and beans to be blessed that the crop may be a good one.

In the evening the priest, an elder of the chief's family, goes to the village altar and all the people gather outside in perfect silence to hear his words. He changes his voice so that the people think that an important chief, long dead, has come back to life. The one who speaks from the next world has been chosen by the witch doctor in advance, and every one knows who it is who has come to help them. The voice from within the house where the altar is promises a good crop and an abundance of food, if the people work well and if they are good. If they do wrong no rain will be sent. Thus all during the year they live in fear of the judgment of this elder. On the third day they go to their fields and the work begins, but no one thinks of starting work until after the ceremony.

The thought in planning the Christian service last year was that with agriculture, as with other things in the lives of the African, in accepting Christianity and adopting its ways as introduced by foreigners, a very vital thing has been lost, that positive sense of a close relationship between the work of the hand and

the worship of the heart. We had originally thought of having the service for the school children, as the women of the community had at times in past years had a little service of their own. The pastor, however, was very much interested in the idea and gave a general invitation. Some parts of the service were more suitable for children than for adults, but we had no time to prepare other material, and every one liked it so well that they asked that it be made an annual affair.

This year the service was held on the 29th of September in the afternoon, when the women had come from their work. The school children came from their classes, and those who work in the afternoon came from the fields, the kitchens or from gathering wood. This year there are 580 pupils in Lutamo school, so the assembly hall, which serves also as chapel, was well filled when the crowd of women and some men came in for the service.

The leader, Isaac Capitiya, read as the Invocation, passages of praise from the psalms, followed by a hymn of praise. The deaconess of the district led in prayer, ending with the Lord's prayer in concert. We sang another hymn of praise for the beauty of the earth, the light of the sun, the moon and the stars. Then Salome, who teaches small girls, led thirty of her smallest children to the platform and, as she read the verses of a beautiful nature poem, the children repeated the chorus in concert.

We then sang the translation of "All Things Bright and Beautiful." Emilio Catombelo, another teacher, read the 19th psalm, and the leader led us in a simple meditation, finishing with a prayer of thanksgiving for the beauty and the bounty which Nature provides. Following the singing of "We Plough the Fields and Scatter the Good Seed on the Land," Sekulu Capindisa read from Mark 4: 1–9 and Galatians 6: 7.

Then four baskets of seed corn and beans were brought to the front, representing four groups, the boys' and girls' boarding schools, the girls of Means School across the river, and the women of the district. The pastor in his quiet and confident way, speaking so that the smallest child could understand, linked the thoughts of the old way of bringing the seed for the blessing of the ancestors, to the idea of consecrating the work of our hands

in the fields to the Lord. We had been afraid last year that the children coming from non-Christian homes might misinterpret the service, but the pastor's ample explanation and his reverent handling of the new idea soon dispelled all fears. He said that Mr. Coles of Galangue had asked him once if he ever thought that, after all, in agriculture our work is only a small part of a great process, for God does the major part of it for us. It is only when we work with God that we get results.

When he had finished, Sekulu Canjila, the foreman of the Agricultural Department of Currie Institute, brought, to supplement the corn and bean seed, some of the newer types of seed now being introduced into native agriculture, better grades of corn, soya beans, various kinds of cabbage, tomatoes, and fruits. His talk was a mixture of practical hygiene and food values, with a good deal of sound agricultural propaganda thrown in. No one who knows of the existing malnutrition among African people, and the resulting annual loss of life, could question the wisdom of his talk before such a group.

The pastor then announced an offering to provide seed and food for cripples. From under the long benches the women drew forth baskets of corn and beans, wheat, cabbage, tomatoes, fruit, peanuts and eggs, and brought them up to the front of the chapel. Two school boys received them. Some of the men also donated something and said that next year they all wanted to share in bringing gifts. We sang "Sowing in the Morning," and the pastor closed the service with the benediction. The life of the African is so closely linked with the land that anything which relates their religion with the soil or with its products is very easily understood by them.

Seed-Time Service of Worship

This lovely service was prepared and conducted at Springville, Pennsylvania, in June, 1942, by the Rev. Philip N. Pitcher and the Rev. Philip Humason Steinmetz. Its rugged and homely language and nearness to the concerns of daily rural life will especially commend it. The litanies may be translated into other languages for use in rural areas in other countries.

Hymn: O Worship the King (All standing)

Responsive Reading: Psalm 65 (All standing)

Gloria Patri (All standing)

Reading: Deuteronomy 8 in words Moses might use were he to talk to us today[1] (All seated)

Minister: Now let us ask God's forgiveness for all the ways in which we have abused His gifts:

In Unison: O God the Father, from whom all fatherhood is named, graciously behold us Thy children bowed in penitence before Thee. Thou art kind to those who are ungrateful and makest sun and rain, seed-time and harvest to come to those who are just and to those who are unjust. But we have not been so generous in our dealings with each other as Thou hast been with us. Help us each to feel our share of guilt and to turn from whatever part we have had in sinful ways, for the sake of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, Our Lord. *Amen.*

Minister: For being generous only to those who deserve help and turning a deaf ear to those who are shiftless or ungrateful,

People: Father, forgive us.

Minister: For voting for those who promise us special privileges, not caring who must pay the bill,

People: Father, forgive us.

Minister: For fearing and hating Thy children in Germany, Italy, and Japan,

People: Father, forgive us.

Minister: For trying to get more than we give,

People: Father, forgive us.

1 See note at end of this Service.

Minister: For buying luxuries on installment when we still owed bills to storekeepers and doctors and said we could give no more to Thy Church,

People: Father, forgive us.

Minister: For putting off doing our part in the hope that someone else would do it for us,

People: Father, forgive us.

Minister: For thinking "It serves them right" when we heard of the bombing of German and Japanese cities and civilians,

People: Father, forgive us.

Minister: For telling stories about our neighbors which hurt them, and sometimes are not even true,

People: Father, forgive us.

Minister: For turning over to the school the training of our children and blaming teachers for traits which our careless home training had allowed to grow like weeds in their lives,

People: Father, forgive us.

Minister: For letting other interests and loyalties take the place of prayer and worship of Thee,

People: Father, forgive us.

Minister: For committing the particular sins which we each open before Thee as we are in silence,

People: Father, forgive us.

Silence for one minute

Declaration of God's Forgiveness

Minister: Conscious of our Father's goodness and mercy, let us give thanks unto Him:

Minister: For the knowledge that we are forgiven,

People: We thank Thee, O Father.

Minister: For the coming of seed-time, for good soil, for abundant rains,

People: We thank Thee, O Father.

Minister: For the friendship which prompts farmers to share tools and labor,

People: We thank Thee, O Father.

Minister: For neighbors who help when sickness or death, old age or new babies come to us,

People: We thank Thee, O Father.

Minister: For students and laboratories and colleges whence come fuller knowledge of Thy ways, better seeds, better methods, county agents and other helps to us who farm the land,

People: We thank Thee, O Father.

Minister: For the Grange and other community associations, their leaders and plans,

People: We thank Thee, O Father.

Minister: For springs of pure water, for wind and sunshine, for the increase of plants and animals,

People: We thank Thee, O Father.

Minister: For homes and chores and the fellowship of field and kitchen,

People: We thank Thee, O Father.

Minister: For the blessings of sleep and the renewed strength of awakening in the morning,

People: We thank Thee, O Father.

Minister: And now, O Father, we humbly beseech Thee that Thou Who hast taught us to pray for our daily bread wilt enable us to use it and all Thy gifts according to Thy Will.

People: We beseech Thee to hear us, O God.

Minister: That Thou wilt give us skill in planting and tending crops and caring for our herds,

People: We beseech Thee to hear us, O God.

Minister: That Thou wilt give us strength and health and knowledge of Thy laws so that our bodies may be useful in Thy service,

People: We beseech Thee to hear us, O God.

Minister: That Thou wilt defend our souls as we struggle in war that hatred and malice may not overcome them,

People: We beseech Thee to hear us, O God.

Minister: That Thou wilt enlighten and lead our President and Governor and all those in authority over us,

People: We beseech Thee to hear us, O God.

Minister: That Thou wilt revive Thy Church beginning in our hearts and reaching out through us to Thy children everywhere,

People: We beseech Thee to hear us, O God.

Hymn: Fairest Lord Jesus (All standing)
Scripture Reading: Leviticus 26: 3–6
Hymn: For the Beauty of the Earth (All standing)

CONSECRATION OF THE SOIL, THE SEED, AND THE TOOLS

THE SOIL

Minister: This is top-soil. It is symbolic of the holy earth from which each of us lives. Each of us has the sacred trust of some bit of this fertile part of the earth. It is capable of sustaining our lives and the lives of our fellow men. If it is misused, if it is robbed of its fertility, not only those who rob it, but all mankind, suffers.

We are now to ask God's blessing on the soil He has given us to till. Let us pray.

In Unison: O God, who hast granted us the privilege of working with Thy holy earth, and Who hast already blessed it with fertility not of our making, grant that it may be further blessed of Thee through us. Teach us to bless the soil with wise use and provident care, that through our labors, begun, continued and ended in Thee, its fertility may be increased. So may Thy blessing enrich Thy holy earth through us, Thy husbandmen and handmaidens, disciples of Thy Son, Jesus Christ in whose Name we pray. *Amen.*

THE SEED

Minister: This is hybrid seed corn. It symbolizes the cooperation of God and man in the creating of the good things of the earth. For it is God who first created the germ of life that makes possible the reproduction of plant and animal life, year after year. Yet man, by using his God-given mind in the discovery of new meanings in God's laws, has been able to produce seed that meets his needs better than did that first Indian corn. Let us ask God's blessing on the seed.

In Unison: Eternal Father, we thank Thee for the mysteries of life and death and new life that are bound so securely within these seeds. Bless, we humbly beseech Thee, all the seeds we

have planted and are planting, that they may be fruitful and, in losing themselves in Thy holy earth, may find themselves in a bountiful harvest. And grant, O God, that, as we handle these sacred seeds, we may do our part by planting only clean seed in clean, fertile fields, our trust firmly rooted in Thee and Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

THE TOOLS

Minister: These are tools with which man tills the holy earth, nurturing the sacred seeds into an abundant harvest. Here, again, man's mind has been working in cooperation with its Maker to discover better ways of doing the work of agriculture. So it is that man no longer scratches the earth with a stick, but turns the soil over with a steel plow. So it is that even these symbols of cultivation and of harvest have been largely replaced by horse- and tractor-drawn implements, that man may make more efficient use of his time and energy. And so it is that man is learning that it is sinful to turn furrows downhill, to run rows up and down, to borrow fertility from the soil without paying it back, and to leave bare fields exposed to the erosion of weather. Let us ask God's blessing on the tools.

In Unison: Gracious God, Whose Son, our Lord, made tools for farmers, grant Thy blessing upon the implements with which we work. May they be no longer symbols of drudgery, but of the blessed privileges that are ours. Guard us, O Father, from the preoccupation with things that leads us to forget Thee and Thy laws. May we never become so fond of our machines that we lose our deep love for Thy holy earth. May we always respect her, for she is indeed our mother.

O Thou Master Farmer of the Universe, teach us to labor with love and patience, that, even as the cross of sacrificing love stands above these symbols of the soil, the seed and the tools, so, in all our dealings with these things on our farms and in our gardens, we may know Thy presence with us, and may labor with joy for the fulfillment of Thy will, that mankind may be fed. Consecrate with Thy presence the way our feet may go; and the humblest work will shine, and the rough-

est places be made plain. These things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

Hymn: We Plow the Fields and Scatter (All standing)

Benediction

NOTE: The paraphrase of the 8th chapter of Deuteronomy used in this Service was made for the occasion. Its text follows:

God orders us to know and keep His Commandments if we expect to continue in the land which He has given us to use, and to have peace and prosperity, good crops, healthy children and steady employment.

Remember that He has brought us through some hard times. When it seemed as if all hope of freedom had died, He led brave souls across great, stormy seas to find this fruitful land. And when the fierce climate nearly ruined the first people to arrive, He led others to bring relief and reenforcements. And when the selfishness of local interests and private feuds broke out in a Revolution against our Mother-land, He found a way, through a few people who cared more for the whole country than for themselves, to establish a Federal Government and to maintain it when, over and over again, it was threatened by special interests, slave owners, factory owners, labor unions, the farm lobby, the veteran lobby, and many other selfish pressure groups.

Through all these many years He has provided the means of life, the succession of crops so bountiful that we did not know how to distribute them among ourselves but were forced by our concern over money to destroy them, the increase of children, an abundance of iron, coal, copper, forests, wild life, water power, riches so great that every nation under heaven seems poor by comparison.

He has given us these gifts to use for Him, to be improved, to be multiplied, to be shared in love and fellowship with those of other nations and races, as grateful children, happy, free and active in doing what their Father desires.

But He warns us not to make the mistake of thinking that all this bounty is something we have made, saying:

"My power and the might of mine hand has gotten me this wealth."

For it is He that has given the power to His children and when they forget about Him and cut themselves off from constant communion with Him and hate and fear and kill each other and try to keep some nations from having a share in His bounty and the use of His holy earth and keep some races from equal rights and give more honor to rich men and banks and powerful political leaders and ruthless generals than to Him and think more about how to get ahead than how to help the family on the next farm or in the next block, then they perish utterly, as has every such group in all the ages of the world.

Planting Festival

This service was used in 1941 at the Washoe Indian Mission, Dresslerville, Nevada, by the Rev. George W. Swart, minister. The address was given by the Agricultural Extension Agent of the County.

AT THE GARDENS

All Sing: What a Friend We Have in Jesus (One verse)

All Read: Praise ye the Lord. For it is good to sing praises unto our God. Sing praise unto our God who covereth the heavens with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the animals his food, and to the young birds which cry. Praise ye the Lord. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. (From Psalms 147 and 150.)

Prayer of Blessing on Fields and Gardens

AT THE CHURCH

Singing of Hymns: America, the Beautiful; We Plough the Fields

Reading of Scripture: Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem: Praise thy God, O Zion. He maketh peace in thy borders and filleth thee with the finest of wheat. He sendeth forth his commandment upon the earth: his word runneth very swiftly. He giveth snow like wool: He scattereth the frost like ashes. He casteth out his word and melteth them: He causeth his wind to blow and the waters to flow. He sendeth the springs into the valleys which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field. By them shall the fowls of the air have their habitation and sing among the branches. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle and the plants for the service of men. Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labor, until the evening. Thou openest thine hand and they are filled with good. The Lord shall rejoice in his works. (From Psalms 147 and 104.)

Singing of Hymn: This Is My Father's World

Prayer of Thanksgiving: For Snow, Rain; Sun, Clouds; Earth, Seed.

Leader: Let us praise God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, His Son: for the day, for the glory and warmth of the sun, for the stir of life, for honest toil that wins food and rest.

Response: We praise God for the day.

Leader: For the earth which sustains our life; for the mountains, the canyons, and deserts; for the beauty of the fields and flowers and trees.

Response: We praise God for the earth.

Leader: For the sky, for the shifting clouds, for the glory of sunrise and sunset which fills our hearts with the glory of God.

Response: We praise God for the sky.

Leader: For the shelter of our homes; for fathers and mothers who provide for us; for brothers and sisters who share our life; for the salvation of Jesus Christ which makes us brothers and sisters in the family of God.

Response: We praise God for our homes.

Leader: For friends who have exalted us by their trust, encouraged us by their love, and enriched our lives by sharing their confidence and love.

Response: We praise God for our friends.

Singing of Hymn: Work for the Night Is Coming

Address

Singing of Hymn: Thy Word Is Like a Garden

Sermon: Life—A Gift of God. Genesis 1: 29, 30

Prayer of Dedication: (All who have brought seed, or garden tools, to come before minister, to dedicate their labor to God)

Singing of Hymn: The Beautiful Garden of Prayer

Benediction

Gifts of Seed Packets: A portion of its return is to be given to God through the Church, whether flowers or vegetables.

Agriculture and God's Providence

So agriculture is an exhibit of God's Providence. It is a doctrine frequently forgotten in these days of industry and engineering; but no countryman can forget that it is God who provides. He knows how little man does, how much God reserves to his other creatures, the sun and the rain, and the tiny beings who make the living soil.

There are today two agricultures striving for the world's approval. One is bold and commercial. It denies the religious message of the plough and refuses to the ploughman his passion for his land. The other is a tillage of faith, which fears not sweat, dripping over the eyes like tears, because of the oldest of all faith, the conviction that God will provide.

—From a Rural Life Sunday Message
by the late WARREN H. WILSON.

The Rains Have Come

The rains have come!
For days and weeks and months
The earth, dry, parched,
Has opened wide her mouth toward a brazen sky.
The sun, a fiery orb,
Has mercilessly run his daily course,
Giving no heed to the panting earth.
But at long last, in blessing,
Soft raindrops, one by one,
The parched earth caress;
And throbbing, sobbing,
The glad, good earth revives,
And bursts forth in a grateful song of praise.
The rains have come!

—EMMA K. ZIEGLER
Anklesvar, India.—From the *Gospel Messenger*, October 7, 1939.

Prayer for the Land

(A member of the Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life [Oxford, England], who felt the need of "a prayer for the land for all who are engaged in agriculture," has prepared the petition that follows.)

We beseech thee, gracious Lord God, to remember Thy servants in all country places who labor to cultivate and make fertile the land. Give them in all times a patient and reverent devotion to their high calling. Strengthen them with hope to meet all the hazards, trials and frustrations of war and weather, Bless their labor with fruitfulness. Refresh their toil with thy goodness.

Almighty and all loving Lord who hast given for our use the kindly fruits of the earth that we may enjoy them, grant us, with minds that worship Thee, to realize our dependence upon these Thy gifts. Give us a deep sense of our stewardship. May we labor to cultivate the earth with hope and humility, with enterprise and energy, without grudging and without greed. Make us good neighbors one of another. Stir up in us a kindly management and understanding of all beasts and birds, domestic and wild, among whom we work, remembering that by Thy hand we and they and the whole earth were and are created. *Amen.*

Prayer in Spring

O God, Maker of the holy earth, Giver of every gift that blesses mankind, we thank Thee for Thy love to us in seed and blossom, in fruit and grain, in human friendships, joys and affections. Grant that from the winter of our present pain and sorrow there may burst forth a verdant and more glorious earth. As partakers and stewards of Thy bounty, may we never deprive any man of the share Thou hast provided for him of earth's wealth and blessings. As Jesus taught us, may we be brothers and servants of all. *Amen.*

—R. E. Diffendorfer

From *The Pastor's Journal,* May, 1943.

The Country Church

In some great day
The country church
Will find its voice
And it will say:

I stand in the fields
Where the wide earth yields
Her bounties of fruit and of grain,
Where the furrows turn
Till the plowshares burn
As they come round and round again;
Where the workers pray
With their tools all day
In sunshine and shadow and rain.

And I bid them tell
Of the crops they sell
And speak of the work they have done;
I speed ev'ry man
In his hope and plan
And follow his day with the sun;
And grasses and trees
The birds and the bees
I know and I feel ev'ry one.

And out of it all
As the seasons fall
I build my great temple alway:
I point to the skies,
But my footstone lies
In commonplace work of the day;
For I preach the worth
Of the native earth,—
To love and to work is to pray.

—Liberty Hyde Bailey

(Used by permission of the author)

CHAPTER II

RURAL LIFE AND ROGATION SUNDAYS

An Order of Service for Rural Life Sunday
Order of Service for Rogationtide and Blessing of the Fields
A Burmese Day of Prayer for the Cultivator and His Crops

THE ORIGIN OF RURAL LIFE SUNDAY

RURAL LIFE SUNDAY, *the fifth after Easter, which has its roots in the Rogation Days, is a day set apart for emphasizing the meaning of Christianity for rural life; for the invocation of God's blessing upon the seed, the fruits of the soil, and the cultivators of the earth; for the consideration of justice for agriculture and the spiritual values of rural life. It was first observed in 1929, at the suggestion of the International Association of Agricultural Missions, and according to plans adopted by the Home Missions Council and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, and many religious bodies.*

HOW TO OBSERVE RURAL LIFE SUNDAY

Both rural and city churches observe Rural Life Sunday. Each type of church may invite the other to share in some of the services. Parishes consisting of several churches in a circuit or yoked field should make it a parish day for all services and a dinner on the grounds. Country and city pastors might exchange pulpits on this day. Local agricultural organizations, such as 4-H Clubs, Future Farmers, Farm Bureau, Grange and Farmers' Union, are often willing to attend and share in the services. A rural play or pageant may be substituted for the suggested discussion groups in the evening. In certain states 4-H Clubs are especially interested in Rural Life Sunday. There has also been an observance of 4-H Club Sunday in some states on the Sixth Sunday after Easter.

An Order of Service for Rural Life Sunday[1]

Prelude

Call to Worship: Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise from the ends of the earth; for while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

Invocation: O Lord of sunshine and storm, seedtime and harvest, grant us, we beseech Thee this day, the blessing of Thy presence. We remember Thy sons and daughters of all lands who sow and till, that Thy children may be fed. As we wait upon Thee may we understand Thy divine plan of life and growth and may our souls be blessed with a renewal of faith and hope in the harvest of Thy truth in the lives of men. *Amen.*

Hymn: Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

Prayer of Confession (In unison): O Lord our God, we come in humility confessing our sins and shortcomings. We pray Thy forgiveness. We repent of our hardness of heart and our unfruitful lives. We have not lived in complete trust and love within our families and community. We have wasted the virgin strength of the soil Thou didst entrust to us. We have not carefully husbanded the good seed. Thy abundant world of nature lies all about us, yet we have been slow to learn the secrets of Thy holy earth. Deep furrows, seeds of promise, the discipline of patient waiting, and the sacrificial gifts which are the fruit of growth all bear Thy message. Yet we have not given heed. We have not trusted in the growth of Thy Kingdom through every storm and trial. Lead us, O God, forward into a world whose pulse and beat will be the unhurried rhythm of growth, and root our lives deep in the soil of Thy ever-growing Kingdom. In Jesus' name. *Amen.*

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1 Prepared for the Committee on Town and Country by Ralph and Mary Heald Williamson, Ithaca, N. Y.

Silent Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Anthem or Solo: That Cause Can Neither Be Lost Nor Stayed

Minister: Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God.

Response: Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.

Minister: He watereth the hills from His chambers, the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Thy works.

Response: He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man; that he may bring forth food out of the earth.

Minister: For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase,

Response: And the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.

Minister: And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction,

Response: Yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers:

Minister: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying,

Response: This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

Minister: Then shall He give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth,

Response: And it shall be fat and plenteous; in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures.

Minister: For thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.

Response: Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

New Testament Lesson: Mark 4: 26–32; 3–9

Silent Meditation

Pastoral Prayer and Choral Response

Offering, Offertory, and Choral Response

Children's Story or Sermon

Hymn: We Plough the Fields and Scatter

Sermon

Prayer

Hymn: O Beautiful for Spacious Skies

Silent Meditation (Seated)

Benediction and Choral Response

Postlude

¶ Suggested sermon topics: The Christ of the Countryside, God Giveth the Increase, The Storm and the Seed, The Seed and the Sower, In God's Garden, God and the Good Earth, The Holy Earth, The Seed and the Soil, The Unplowed Furrow, The Urge of the Seed, Those Who Sow.

¶ Suggested texts: Gen. 1: 1, In the beginning God created; Hosea 10: 12, Break up your fallow ground; John 10: 11, I am the good shepherd; John 15: 5, I am the vine, ye are the branches; Luke 9: 62, No man, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom; Psalms 1: 3, And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; John 12: 24, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit; 1 Cor. 3: 7, So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

¶ Other suggested hymns: Break Thou the Bread of Life; Fairest Lord Jesus; For the Beauty of the Earth; God of the Earth,

the Sky, the Sea; O Lord of Heaven and Earth and Sea; God Who Touchest Earth with Beauty; This Is My Father's World; When Morning Gilds the Skies; Yes, God Is Good: In Earth and Sky; God That Madest Earth and Heaven.

Order of Service for Rogationtide and Blessing of the Fields

This service, prepared for Lutheran Churches in America, was published in 1938 by the Board of Publication of the United Lutheran Church in America, and is used by their permission.

INTROIT

Minister: The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord; and Thou givest them their meat in due season.

Thou openest Thine hand; and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

People: O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon His Name; make known His deeds among the people. Alleluia.

Glory be to the Father . . .

Collect: O Lord God, our Father, by Whose loving provision the wide reaches of the earth bring forth food for man and beast: Withhold not, we beseech Thee, Thy open and sustaining hand, but bless the fields and farms, the hills and vales, the trees and grass, that nature may bring forth her fruits in due season, and men may take of Thy gifts for themselves and for the humble beasts which serve them; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, One God, world without end. *Amen.*

Old Testament Lesson: Deuteronomy 28: 2–9

Epistle: II Corinthians 9: 6–12

Gradual: To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise ye the Lord. Alleluia!

Gospel: Matthew 6: 16–21, 24–34

General Prayer: Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we, Thine unworthy servants, do give Thee most humble and hearty thanks for all Thy goodness.

O Everlasting God, Who art the eternal Fountain and only Giver of life: We bless Thee that we may again behold on every side awakened nature; and as Thou dost cheer our spirits with the fresh grass and new green trees and plants, grant us thankful hearts to praise Thee for the promise of Thy renewed provision for our body and life, and an abiding trust in Thy unchanging love now and eternally; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

O Lord, give Thy blessing, we pray Thee, to our daily work, that we may do it in faith and heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men. All our powers of body and mind are Thine, and we earnestly devote them to Thy service. Sanctify them, and the work in which they are engaged; let us not be slothful, but fervent in spirit; and do Thou, O Lord, so bless our efforts, that they may bring forth in us the fruits of true wisdom. Give us this day our daily bread, that we may be nourished in our body. Give us this day Thy Holy Spirit, that we may be nourished in our soul. Give us this day grace to use every opportunity of service, that we may live to Thy praise; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, One God, world without end. *Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer

Hymns

Processional Hymn: Praise My Soul the King of Heaven

VERSICLES: (Responsive)

Minister: I was glad when they said unto Me:
People: Let us go into the house of the Lord.

Minister: Peace be within thy walls.
People: And prosperity within thy palaces.
Minister: O praise the Lord, all ye nations:
People: Praise Him, all ye people. Alleluia!
Glory be to the Father . . .

Psalmody: Psalm 107: 31–43 (read responsively)

Hymn: For the Beauty of the Earth

Lessons: *First Lesson*—Joel 2: 21–26
Second Lesson—Philippians 1: 2–11
Third Lesson—Matthew 13: 24–30

℣ Respond after First and Second Lessons; choir number after Third Lesson.

Hymn: Thy Word, O Lord, Like Gentle Dews

Minister: Let us pray.

O Lord God, Who hast made Thy Church a Vineyard of Thine own planting, and Thy Precious Word the Seed of Life therein: For all Thy husbandmen we beseech Thy grace faithfully to labor therein and to sow Thy Seed; for all Thy plants we beseech the Dew of Thy Spirit and the Nourishment of the Sun of Righteousness that they may be fruitful in faith and every good work; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord.

We beseech Thee, O Lord, have mercy upon all those who labor in the cultivation of the earth, and grant that by the power of Thy Grace both their own souls and their labors may be fruitful; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, Who dost feed the birds and clothe the flowers, and Who carest for us as a father doth for his children: We beseech Thee, graciously guard us against distrust and vain overcarefulness, and help us, through Thy Holy Spirit, to live to the hallowing of Thy Name, the coming of Thy Kingdom, and the doing of Thy Will; so that we may cast all our care on Thee and in unwavering faith abide trustingly in Thee; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our

Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, One God, world without end. *Amen.*

℄ Then shall Minister and Congregation go in procession to the Grove or to the Fields, where the remainder of this Service shall be conducted. A Processional Hymn may be sung. However, should the weather be inclement, this Service may be concluded as hereinafter appointed in the church.

Processional Hymn: Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Address

Offering: For a definite Cause or Object. (Choir numbers permissive here)

PRECES

Minister: Praise ye the Lord!
People: O give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.
Minister: Bless this year for us, O our God:
People: We beseech Thee to hear us.
Minister: Bestow a blessing upon the face of the earth.
People: And satisfy us with Thy goodness.
Minister: Grant to all who labor trust in Thy good provision and contentment with Thy ordering:
People: We beseech Thee to hear us.
Minister: Bless our hearts, that in thankfulness we may render Thee praise, and joyfully share with others the blessings of Thy bounty:
People: We beseech Thee to hear us.
Minister: O bless our years; make them good years:
People: That we may walk before Thee in faith and love all the days of our life.
Minister: Bless the Lord, O my soul:
People: Praise be to God. *Amen.*
Our Father, Who art in heaven. . . .

Hymn: On What Has Now Been Sown

Benediction

A Burmese Day of Prayer for the Cultivator and His Crops

Order of Service for Morning Worship

Call to Worship: Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.

Hymn

Prayer (to be said by all):

Almighty and everlasting God, Ruler of the Universe, Who hast commanded us to till the land with our labour for the support of mankind and the sustenance of the body, we humbly beseech Thee that Thou wouldst graciously look upon whatsoever good seed is sown or planted in the fields; give us temperate weather, make the crops plentiful, and grant that they may arrive at full perfection, that we Thy servants, thankfully receiving the abundant fruit of Thy gift, may pay due and acceptable praise to Thy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer (to be said by all)

Responsive Reading: Psalm 65

Choir

℄ Let the Minister and the congregation say:

Minister: For the beauty and richness of the earth on which we live—

People: We give thanks unto Thee, O God.

Minister: For those who, in rain and shine, till the fields for us—

People: We give thanks unto Thee, O God.

Minister: For the privilege we have of being part of that great company of faithful men and women who lived their lives in village and country—

People: We give thanks unto Thee, O God.

Minister: We remember John the Baptist, the wilderness preacher, for his faith and courage—

People: We give thanks unto Thee, O God.
Minister: For the lowly Jesus, Who was born in a stable—
People: We give thanks unto Thee, O God.
Minister: We are glad that Jesus was a village boy.
People: O Lord, bless all village boys and girls.
Minister: Jesus knew about and loved seeds and flowers and trees.
People: Help us to understand them too, and to make the earth more beautiful by planting and caring for them.
Minister: Jesus called His disciples from the roads and lake and villages of Galilee.
People: O Lord, call disciples today from the roads and fields and rivers of Burma.
Minister: Jesus preached to village people from lake and hillside.
People: O God, bless the village preachers of Burma and all village Christians.
Minister: Jesus is the Good Shepherd and cares for his sheep.
People: Help us, O Lord, to love all men and minister to those who need our help.
Minister: At the last, Jesus prayed in a garden, suffered death on a hill top and arose from the dead in a garden.
People: O Christ, Who art the true Gardener of all the earth, look on us with mercy, help us to grow in Thy love and give us eternal life. *Amen.*

Pastoral Prayer

Scripture Lesson: Deut. 28: 1–6; St. Mark 4: 1–9.

Sermon

Offering

Hymn

Benediction

Rural Life Collect

O Thou, our Everliving Creator, who in the springtime makest the trees to bud and blossom; Grant unto Thy children a springtime of the soul in which our spirits flower in the radiant beauty of their Creator that all men may be drawn into the fellowship of the living truth which is found in our Master, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

—Robert Irving Howland

Rural Life Sunday Prayer

Great Father, Creator of all, we thank Thee for the earth and its fullness. We treasure the good earth, the work of Thy hands; the fields of grain, our pastures, our gardens and lawns. For the fertility of the soil nurtured by Thy changing seasons, we are thankful. We praise Thee for the land upon which we live.

Grant, O God, that we may never we unmindful of Thy gift of the earth where we dwell. Lead us at the rising of the sun to lift our faces in praise to Thee for the soil and what it affords us. May we continually enjoy the earth.

Make our hands clean and our hearts pure that we may please Thee and be good neighbors to those who share this great dwelling. In the name of Jesus. *Amen.*

Rural Life Sunday Prayer

Father of all creatures both great and small, we acknowledge Thy wonderful plan of life. We praise Thee for letting the earth bring forth its living creatures according to their kind. We pause to marvel at the work of Thy hands—the kingdom of animals. The earth is full of thy living riches. Make us worthy keepers of the farm animals. In the name of the Good Shepherd of the sheep. *Amen.*

The Eleventh Commandment

XI. Thou shalt inherit the holy earth as a faithful steward, conserving its resources and productivity from generation to generation. Thou shalt protect thy fields from soil erosion and thy hills from overgrazing by thy herds, so that thy descendants may have abundance forever. If any shall fail in this stewardship of the land, his fertile fields shall become sterile stones and gullies, and his descendants shall decrease and live in poverty or vanish from the face of the earth.

—Walter C. Lowdermilk

That Cause Can Never Be Lost[1]

Danish Folk Tune

That cause can never be lost or stay'd
Which takes the course of what God hath made,
And is not trusting in walls and towers,
But slowly growing from seed to flowers.

Each noble service that men have wrought
Was first conceived as a fruitful thought;
Each worthy cause, with a future glorious,
By quietly growing becomes victorious.

Thereby itself like a tree it shows;
That high it reaches, as deep it grows;
And when the storms are its branches shaking,
It deeper root in the soil is taking.

Be then no more by a storm dismayed,
For by it the full-grown seeds are laid;
And through the tree by its might it shatters,
What then if thousands of seeds it scatters?

1 From *World of Song*. Copyright 1941. Danish American Young People's League. Grandview College, Des Moines, Iowa. Used by permission.

CHAPTER III

HARVEST FESTIVALS AND SERVICES

First Fruits' Service
Thanksgiving at Kambini
A Harvest Festival Sunday in North China
An Order of Service for a Harvest Festival
A Litany of the Harvest

FROM *the dawn of Hebrew agricultural life to the present day, one of the most popular and widely observed occasions of worship and praise is the Harvest Thanksgiving. It is finding rich expression in many lands, and the examples given in this chapter are excellent gleanings from a field where there may be in the future a great harvest of beautiful and inspiring experiences of worship.*

First Fruits' Service

Order of Service and Outline of Sermon used at a First Fruits' Service at Lassa Station of Church of the Brethren Mission in Nigeria, Africa.

¶ Each family of the village has cut a number of ripened heads of early kaffir corn. These are brought to the church. Some may have maize ears for this ripens about the same time. Some representative of the family holds these until a certain time in the service. Then they are brought forward and placed before the altar.

Call to Worship:

Oh, come let us worship and bow down;
Let us kneel before the Lord, our maker:
For He is our God,
And we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.
Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving;
Let us make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms.

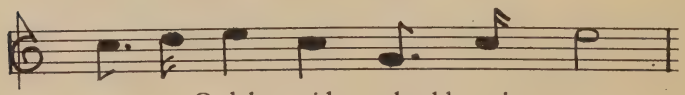
Congregation Sings Softly:

God is in His Holy Temple,
Let all the earth keep silence, keep silence,
Before Him. *Amen.*

All Pray Together: The Lord's Prayer

Congregation Sings two Hymns:

All People That on Earth Do Dwell, and
Let Us All Assemble Here (An African Tune)



1. God has said we should a - rise
2. All of you who are true men
3. Let us real - ly put our faith
4. Sons of men, let us re - pent

We should leave all e-vil things
All he who loves Je-sus, too
In Je-sus the right-eous one
We will then our wor-ship give

Let us all as-sem-ble here.
Let him leave all e-vil things. (Repeat for
He will save us, ev'-ry one. Chorus)
Un-to Je-sus Lord of All.

Scripture Reading: The Ten Commandments and Psalm 23

¶ In scripture reading the congregation repeats each verse after the minister.

PRESENTATION OF FIRST FRUITS

¶ The minister asks that the first fruits be brought forward and placed before the altar. It is suggested that as each one lay his grain before the altar that they remember that it is an offering to God. It is their acknowledgment that the entire crop is God's and that He has graciously given us this for our food. When all has been brought forward and the people have returned to their places in the church all then bow forward and softly clap their hands. Then an audible prayer is offered, by the African evangelist:

Prayer: God, our Father, behold we are here with great joy before You. We have come with corn from our farms; corn which has already ripened. We have come to acknowledge that it is Your corn for You have given it to us. The day on which we planted the seed no one could surely tell that there would be a harvest. We did not know whether we would see ripened grain or not. Some said, "We will not eat this year for the rains are too late." Others said, "The grasshoppers will destroy the crops."

But even though we had misgivings in our hearts we did plant in faith. We trusted in You, our Father and our God. You sent us the sun and a sufficient amount of rain. You gave us strength of body to cultivate our fields. Now we will have a plentiful harvest. We shall eat. The time of hunger is past. Our Father, You are very good to us. Thank You, our living and watchful Father. We pray in the name of Jesus, Your Son. *Amen.*

Hymn: We Give Thee Thanks, O God, This Day (Dominus Regit Me). This is a song to the above tune especially written for this service.

Sermon: The minister then reads Mark 4: 26–27 and preaches a sermon of which the following is an outline:

1. The Reason for this Service

   a) To thank God for answer to our prayers and rewarding our efforts. We pray, Give us this day our daily bread. He has given. The fear of hunger is past. These first fruits are an assurance that a full harvest will follow.

   b) To remind us again of our complete dependence upon God. We are His. The harvest is His, not our own. We bring these first fruits to His altar to make this acknowledgment.

2. The Good Earth

   a) The earth is good. It is God's greatest blessing to us. We depend upon it entirely for our physical existence. Food comes from our farms or from the trees which grow in the earth. Cotton for our clothing—clay for our houses—grass for thatching—iron for our hoes—the earth is the source of all. Rightly the earth is called Mother Earth for she sustains us.

3. God's Part and Our Part

   God has given us the earth. He, the Father God, has put life in the seed. He has sent the sun and the rain. He has given us life and health and the strength with which to work. Our part is to use the strength that God has given to

cultivate. Although our part is the smaller part, it is an essential part. What a glorious thing to be a farmer working with God and His earth!

4. Our Farms are Miracles

Jesus wants us to learn spiritual lessons from our farms and our farming experience.

a) God's kingdom is like a farm. Our community here is God's farm. We have seen the seed planted. We have seen it begin to grow. We have had to cultivate and keep the wickedness out. We have seen the harvest time in God's farm, too. We have seen people give their hearts to God and become His followers. This is ripened grain gathered into the garner of God. As we rejoice greatly to bring ripened grain into our compounds today, so God rejoices, but with even a greater joy, when anyone chooses to follow Him.

b) God's farm must be extended. Every true farmer as his family increases and his children grow must clear new land and enlarge his farm. There is no African who does not wish to enlarge his family in this way. Likewise God wishes that all our tribe and all the tribes shall be His farm and all the people like ripened grain be safely gathered as His followers. But our efforts are essential if this is to come to pass. He calls us to go into other villages and to make friends with the people and sow the seed which is His Word and His Truth. Let every one consider in his heart the part that he can do in thus extending God's farm.

Hymn: Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun

Prayer and Benediction

Thanksgiving at Kambini

Possibly nowhere in Africa has finer work been done in making rural Christian worship vital in the lives of the simple farmer folk than at Kambini, Portuguese East Africa. This account of a thanksgiving service is by the Rev. Julian S. Rea, missionary of the Methodist Mission at Kambini.

¶ Our Kambini Harvest Festival or Thanksgiving service is fourteen years old; every year there comes the impulse to tell it abroad and to witness to the abundance of their joy. We ought to know about what to expect now, but every year we are amazed at the riches of their liberality—the fruits of self-giving.

This year Pastor Gideon Jamella set the date for their service especially early because crops had been poor and the people were beginning already to eat up their scant harvest. The week previous to the service everybody was extremely busy with the Kambini Fair and Exhibition of school work and activities. From early morning until midnight we were practicing for dramas, making posters, getting out all the material needed in the competitive showing of fruits, grains, vegetables, all sorts of hand work and even a little live stock. On Friday noon the prizes were awarded and the crowds dispersed, but there was still the cleaning up to do, and packing things away for another year.

Even Saturday found everybody busy, so that the decorating of the church was left till early Sunday morning. When I went down to help with that I found only the older boys of the Student Volunteer Band, for the evangelists (village pastors in training) had gone out through the countryside to gather people in for the service. Nothing gives me more joy than helping arrange fruit and flowers about the altar and through the church in such a way as to make more evident the glory and beauty of His presence. Around the top of each of the twelve pillars we placed a crown of the beautiful wild gladiolas—growing out of a giant wreath of miscellaneous flowers and branches. Trailing runners of the lacy African clematis completed the effect of natural growth and beauty.

The altar rail was richly hung with yellow corn and clusters of golden oranges. Bundles of rice, big pumpkins, sweet potato vines,

bunches of bananas and mandioca plants had places of honor around the front of the church so that one could not forget that this was our harvest service.

Helping transform our big impressive sanctuary into a garden of beauty had warmed my heart, but still as we knelt for the opening prayer my thought was one of personal condemnation. Had we not all spent too much time with the exhibits and agricultural show of the past week? Could this possibly be as fine as the services in other years? But the preacher started out by using the Moses drama which had been the crowning success of the exhibition as his text for the morning. Thus all that had gone before was brought into the right perspective with the task at hand and the service went on to its beautiful climax, the bringing of the tithes and offerings.

In the universally loved story, "Why the Chimes Rang," a sad thing happens. The great and the rich and even the mass of the people gave without entering into the joy. It was only when the little lad from the lonely farm crept up unnoticed and dropped his gift of love that the chimes pealed forth—too late for the others. Pastor Jamella did a strange yet a wonderful thing this year. He called first on the student evangelists who lead classes out in the heathen kraals. They and their people came to the altar —group after group. Old grannies, little children, mothers with babies on their backs, and grown men, each brought gifts and poured them out to the Lord. As the piles of corn, peanuts and beans grew, the joy in our hearts increased. When some of these groups emerging for a day at least from their darkness sang, It is Jesus, He is the One. Come to Him; He saves just now, some of our gifts were baptized with tears. We waited our turn for nearly an hour while they came each and every one with a voluntary gift—not to some ancestor they greatly feared, not to appease an evil spirit but as an offering of thanksgiving.

Do you wonder that when opportunity was given to the regular Kambini congregation to give, that the gifts poured out to an accompaniment of heavenly chimes, joy bells ringing in our hearts! Never have we had such joy in giving. All declared the service to be the best of all the years.

Yes, it was a real harvest festival. The crops of corn had been poor and peanuts almost a failure, but there had been other plantings and those had not failed.

Last season when famine faced this section, our Kambini congregation was generous in their aid to people all about here. They not only preached soul salvation but they helped the people to get sweet potato plants and mandioca cuttings. In November they took money out of their treasury and bought seed to give their friends in the kraals. True, this seed gave only a poor yield, yet did it?

No high pressure preaching mission would have brought those non-christian villagers into God's sanctuary to give true thanks. No amount of pleading in our own congregation could have brought forth such generous giving. But because they first gave themselves, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

A Harvest Festival Sunday in North China

¶ This service was held at the Ankechuang Methodist Church in Hopei, North China, on October 20, 1940, under the direction of Pastor T'ao and Mrs. Chang, the worker among the women of the parish. In preparation, these two leaders travelled on bicycles to the Christian homes in all the surrounding villages, informing all the people about plans for the service.

The worship service was held at the church at ten o'clock. Before this hour, many of the people had brought in their contributions and had placed them around the altar of the church. Around the pulpit were arranged 48 sacks of corn, beans, rice, and millet, each with a little paper pennant in a cleft bamboo stick announcing the name of the giver. Similarly, bunches of radishes, turnips, and ears of corn were marked and hung near the altar. Baskets of squash, sweet potatoes, and firm sweet cabbage were arranged along the wall behind the pulpit. Pink envelopes contained the cash contributions of the town folk who had no gardens from

which to contribute the fruits of the earth. In all, the people had brought in fruits and vegetables to the value of $170, and cash to the amount of $30, all of which was used for the benevolences of the congregation.

The service was as follows:

Congregational singing of hymns of Thanksgiving

Responsive Bible readings

Music by the Women of the Church

Testimonies about the material and spiritual blessings of God, by many members of the congregation

Music by the Children of the Church

Thanksgiving message by a Missionary, specially invited for the service

Music by Young Men of the Church

Dedication of the Gifts

Music

Benediction

An Order of Service for a Harvest Festival

This Order of Service follows in large part one that has been used by the congregations of the Moravian Church in America. It is printed in the Hymnal and Liturgies of the Moravian Church (Unitas Fratrum), and is used with permission.

Prelude

Hymn: (St. Thomas s.m.)

Stand up, and bless the Lord,
Ye people of His choice;
Stand up, and bless the Lord your God,
With heart, and soul, and voice.

God is our strength and song,
And His salvation ours;
Then be His love in Christ proclaimed
With all our ransomed powers.

Minister: Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise; be thankful unto Him, and bless His name.

People: For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations.

Minister: All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord, and Thy saints shall bless Thee.

People: They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, and sing of Thy righteousness.

Hymn: (Nun Danket)

To Thee, O God, we raise
Our voice, in choral singing;
To come with prayer and praise,
Our hearts' oblations bringing.
Thou art our fathers' God,
And ever shalt be ours;
Our lips and lives shall laud
Thy name, with all our powers.

℄ Here shall the congregation be seated.

Minister: The Lord said in His heart: While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? He sendeth forth His commandment upon earth: His word runneth very swiftly; He giveth snow like wool: He scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes. He casteth forth His ice like morsels; who can stand before His cold? He sendeth forth His word and melteth them: He causeth His wind to blow, and the waters flow. He prepareth rain for the earth, and maketh it soft with showers, and blesseth the springing thereof. He

causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man, that He may bring forth food out of the earth. Let us fear the Lord our God, Who giveth us the former and the latter rain in its season, and reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of harvest.

People: O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches.

Hymn: (Pleyel's Hymn)

Praise to God, immortal praise,
For the love that crowns our days!
Bounteous source of every joy,
Let Thy praise our tongues employ.

All the blessings of the fields,
All the stores the garden yields,
All to Thee, our God, we owe,
Source whence all our blessings flow.

Minister: Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. He redeemeth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with tender mercies. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.

People: He knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust. He openeth His hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.

Minister: Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings. Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you. For He hath said: I am the Bread of Life. He that cometh unto Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.

Anthem: This may be an appropriate hymn or anthem of harvest or thanksgiving

Scripture Lesson

Pastoral Prayer

Choral Response: (St. Catherine)

Daily, O Lord, our prayers be said,
As Thou hast taught, for daily bread;
But not alone our bodies feed;
Supply our fainting spirits' need!
O Bread of life! from day to day,
Be Thou our Comfort, Food, and Stay.

Offering and Offertory

Response

Sermon

¶ After the sermon the congregation shall rise, and remain standing, until the conclusion of the service.

Minister: Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.

People: And let him that heareth say, Come.

Minister: And let him that is athirst come.

People: And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.

Hymn: (Regent Square)

Thanks we give and adoration
For the gospel's joyful sound;
May the fruits of Thy salvation
In our hearts and lives abound:
King of Glory, King of Glory,
Sway Thy scepter all around.

Glory be to God, the Father!
Glory be to God, the Son!
Glory be to God, the Spirit!
Great Jehovah, Three in One.
Glory, Glory, Glory, Glory,
While eternal ages run.

Benediction and Response

Postlude

A Litany of the Harvest

This litany was prepared by the Rev. August E. Harris, Garberville, California, and was used in a Harvest Festival Service. During the use of the Litany, children, dressed in farm clothes, presented before the altar the various kinds of farm produce mentioned in the litany.

Minister: For the bountiful supply of fruit Thou dost give unto us, for the fruit trees that lie dormant in the winter, and blossom in the springtime, and bring forth their fruit in their season—

People: We praise Thee, and thank Thee, O God.

Minister: For the vegetables that supply us with food for our tables, for the gardens we have cultivated with our own hands—

People: We praise Thee, and thank Thee, O God.

Minister: For the farm animals that toil in our fields, and feed in our pastures, for the fowls that live in our barnyards and help to supply us with the necessities of life—

People: We praise Thee, and thank Thee, O God.

Minister: For the wool that is sheared from our sheep to make clothes and blankets for our warmth and comfort—

People: We praise Thee, and thank Thee, O God.

Minister: For the towering forest from which our wood and lumber is taken, and in the shade of which we find rest from the noonday heat—

People: We praise Thee, and thank Thee, O God.

Minister: For the farmer's home, where the mother toils for the welfare of her children, and where the father finds rest from his daily work, where children learn their first lessons of life and love—

People: We praise Thee, and thank Thee, O God.

Minister: Dear Father in heaven, hear our prayers as we render unto Thee our thanks for our farms. We would thank Thee for the crops of the fields and orchards, and for the animals upon our farms. We would especially pray that Thou wouldst remember the farmers as they go about their daily work. Help them to realize that they are working in cooperation with Thee in the provision of food and raiment for life. In the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, we pray. *Amen.*

Thanksgiving for Harvest

Every tribe on earth is glad at harvest, and Christian people have special services of thanksgiving. Here are some thoughts on harvest and a prayer of thanksgiving for harvest.

Every woman grinding the new grain on her stone is celebrating the goodness of God, who, by His secret power, and by the work of His servants, the sun and the rain, has created good bread for His children from the small seed of grain. Every basket of groundnuts, every bag of rice, every cake of cassava or corn or millet, every loaf of wheat bread, is a keeping of the promises from God. In every language of man there are harvest songs; many such songs are found in the Book of Psalms. The child of God who sings a song of thanksgiving when he brings home the fruit of his planting, and who thanks God in his prayer, is one of the great chorus of men who have thanked God for their harvests through the long years of time.

PRAYER: O God, we rejoice and are glad because there is now a harvest in our fields. We know and we acknowledge that Thou hast opened Thy hand and Thy children are fed. Who but Thy-

self has brought our seed to fruit and to harvest? Thou hast kept Thine ancient promise to feed Thy people; may we keep our promise to serve Thee all our days. May our hands be quick to feed the poor and the stranger. May we be like Jesus, who shared with His friends and with the needy Thy honoured gifts of food and of drink. *Amen.*

—Jean Mackenzie

Thanks for Rain

Thank God for the rain!
The earth was cracked and dry.
Our crops were burning up—
The rice and wheat—both mainstays of our lives
The wells were dry. At night
Small groups stood around them,
Drawing in scant cupfuls
The last few drops.
The air was hot and stifling,
And listlessly we moved
About the necessary tasks of life.

Then—miracle—out of a hot dull sky
Great thunderclouds arose.
One muttering roar before the rain was on us.
A breath of freshness,
Then a roll of silver feet
Across the arid fields and dusty trees.
The birds, in sudden wakening
All chirped and sang with feathers fluffed and spread.
The earth took on a deep brown hue
Of richness ready to be thrown abroad.
All green things laughed in new sweet life,
And we, with glowing hearts,
Raised grateful hands to Heaven with—
Thank God for the Rain!

—Margaret Steward

A Prayer During Harvest

O God, our heavenly Father, who by Thy gracious providence hast made the earth to bring forth her fruits for our use in this Thine appointed time; we most humbly beseech Thee to bless this season, that the harvest Thou hast bestowed may be safely gathered in, for the comfort of Thy children, and the glory of Thy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

—*The Book of Common Order* (Presbyterian)

Thanksgiving for Harvest

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, the fountain of all goodness, who openest Thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing; we give Thee thanks and praise that in Thy mercy Thou hast brought us through the circuit of another year, and that, according to Thy promise, seedtime and harvest have not ceased. We bless Thee that Thou hast crowned the year with Thy goodness, and hast bestowed upon us the kindly fruits of the earth. We pray Thee to grant that we may receive them thankfully and use them carefully, for our own comfort, for the relief of those that are needy, and for the glory of Thy name. Teach us to remember that it is not by bread alone that man doth live, and grant us evermore to feed on Him who is the true bread from heaven, even Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

—*The Book of Common Order* (Presbyterian)

Is there any prophet, any statesman, any leader who will—as Moses once led the Israelites out of the Egyptian bondage—excite the human imagination and lead humanity back to nature, to sunlight, starlight, earth-breath, sweet air, beauty, gaiety and health?

—George W. Russell (AE)

CHAPTER IV

RURAL LIFE DEDICATION SERVICES

An Order for the Dedication of the Seed, the Soil, and the Sowers

Rural Life Consecration Service

A Service of Dedication to the Cause of Rural Life

Dedication of a Tree

THIS *is a series of services which may be used anywhere, and they are designed to lead to a greater appreciation of the holy earth, its gifts and resources, and to a higher sense of the stewardship of the land, which has been entrusted to man. They are planned to lead to a new dedication of life to making the countryside fully Christian.*

An Order for the Dedication of the Seed, the Soil, and the Sowers

By James William Sells

¶ After an Organ Prelude a Processional or Opening Hymn shall be sung, such as, This Is My Father's World. Then shall the Minister say, the People standing and responding.

Minister: Dearly Beloved, as we learn from the Scriptures, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and caused the sun to shine, the rain to fall, the plants to grow and the earth to give forth her increase. Then God said, let us make man in our image and let him have dominion over everything upon the earth.

It is meet, right and our bounden duty to recognize God's ownership and His Providence in the fruition of the earth and the return of the seasons. He is the giver of life in the seed, in the soil, and in the sowers.

We are, therefore, now assembled for the purpose of dedicating the seed that shall be planted, the soil that shall be cultivated and the sowers that labor to the service of God and for the good of mankind.

Minister: The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof;
People: The world, and they that dwell therein.
Minister: For He hath founded it upon the seas,
People: And established it upon the floods.
Minister: Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?
People: Or who shall stand in His holy place?
Minister: He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;
People: Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully,
Minister: He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

People: This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek Thy face, O Lord.

Minister: Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors.

People: And the King of glory shall come in.

Minister: Who is this King of glory?

People: The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

Minister: Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors.

People: And the King of glory shall come in.

Minister: Who is this King of glory?

People: The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.

The Gloria Patri may be said or sung:

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. *Amen.*

¶ Then shall the people be seated and the minister shall read a lesson from the New Testament.

Minister: A sower went out to sow his seed. As he was sowing, some of the seed fell by the path and was trodden on, and the wild birds ate it up. And some of it fell upon the rock, and when it sprang up it withered, because it had no moisture. And some fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. And some fell on good soil, and grew up and yielded a hundred fold.

As He said this He called out,

Let him who has ears to hear, listen!

His disciples asked Him what this figure meant, and He said,

You are permitted to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God, but they are given to others in the form of figures, so that they may look and yet not see, and hear and yet not understand. This is what the figure means. The seed is God's message. The ones by the path are those who hear, then the devil comes and carries off the message from their hearts, so that they may not believe it and be saved. The ones on the

rock are those who receive the message joyfully when they first hear it, but it takes no real root. They believe for a little while, and then in the time of trial they draw back. And what falls among the thorns means those who listen and pass on, and the worries and wealth and pleasures of life stifle them and they yield nothing. But the seed in the good soil means those who listen to the message and keep it in good, true hearts, and yield unfailingly. (*Goodspeed's Translation*)

¶ Here may be offered an extemporary Prayer, followed by the Lord's Prayer. Then may be sung a suitable hymn, such as God, the Omnipotent! King, Who Ordainest, or an Anthem, after which the Sermon may be delivered. An Offering may then be received.

Then shall the Minister say: Life is a unity and is a result of the co-operative activity of the trinity of God, man and nature. Without the gift of vital life, man and nature would not be able to produce food and complete the processes whereby man is sustained. Without man, God would not bring forth from nature that which glorifies Himself and brings companionship unto Him. Without nature, God and man would not have the structural basis for growth of human personality. This trinity is ever dependent one upon the other and this dependence is here today realized again and recognized for the humility of man and to the glory of God. Let us now consider our responsibilities:

Then shall the person chosen present the seed, and he shall say: This seed is symbolic of the various types of seed that shall be planted in this community. When sown it shall bring forth fruit, food, and fibre, so that little children may eat and become strong, so that men and women shall be nurtured and nourished, so that the wheels of industry may turn and so that life may be maintained among both man and beast. This seed is holy, for it contains life, and all seed shall be counted as holy in the sight of God. It shall be planted in a spirit of reverence

and that which comes of it shall be cultivated and harvested in a true spirit of recognition and thankfulness, we being fully mindful of its high origin and destiny.

Then shall the person chosen present soil of the earth and shall say: This soil is symbolic of the earth of this community in which seed shall be planted in hope and from which the harvest shall be anticipated with joy. This soil, this earth, is the result of the creative activity of God. It was created by God for man and beast. It contains the minerals, salts, and fertilizers necessary to nourish the seed and bring forth sturdy plants capable of producing food for both man and beast. This soil will be watered by the rains of God. It will be warmed by the sunshine of God. It will be as a home to the seed so that the seed and plants may develop and bring forth an abundant harvest. This soil is holy earth and shall be cultivated and cared for as a gift of God.

℄ Then shall the Minister receive the Seed and the Soil, lay them upon the Altar, and then place the open Bible upon them.

The People shall stand and with the Minister say: And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; and the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Thus saith God the Lord, He that created the heavens, and stretched them out; He that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein; I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, and for a light.

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not

anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.

I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly.

¶ Then shall the people bow in prayer.

The Minister shall pray: Almighty God, Creator of Life and Sustainer of seed and soil, Thou Who hast by Thy mighty arm brought forth this world and given it unto us for a heritage and a home; Thou Who hast given unto us life through Thy Son, Jesus Christ; and Thou Who hast granted unto us the high and holy task of propagating Thy faith and serving Thee in this day and generation, unto Thee we come in this act of dedication and blessing.

We recognize that Thou art the giver of life. We recognize that Thou art the sender of rain, sunshine and fertility. Without Thee we would not be able to maintain life nor creature existence.

To Thee we come in this hour seeking to dedicate all the seed that shall be sown in this community this year. We bless it in Thy name. We pray that it may fall in good ground and that it may be cultivated and bring forth harvest for a hungry world. Multiply it by Thy creative power and let it bring forth many fold.

We herewith recognize our dependence upon Thee for the life hid within the seed and the soil. As they join in partnership to bring forth fruit, may we join in partnership with Thee to preserve the soil and cultivate the fruit of the seed to Thy glory and our good.

We dedicate and bless this seed in Thy Name.

We dedicate and bless this soil in Thy Name.

We dedicate and bless the sowers of this seed and cultivators of this soil in Thy Name. Grant unto them strength, wisdom and power that they may do that which is right in Thy sight.

This we ask in the Name of Him Who was the sower of good seed in the soil of the life of mankind, even Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

¶ Then shall the people stand and in the Act of Commitment say:

People: We are the sowers of the seed and the tillers of the soil.

We herewith recognize the holiness of the seed and the sacredness of the soil. We herewith acknowledge our responsibility to plant this seed with reverence and to cultivate this soil with care.

We will not waste the seed in wanton scattering; we will not destroy the soil by allowing erosion to wash it off nor weeds to stay its vitality.

We will husband our resources of seed and soil and will guard them with our lives.

We recognize the sacred task that is ours; we recognize the high calling that is ours; we recognize the purpose for which we plant the seed and till the soil; that man and beast may be fed and that life may be maintained for the glory of God and the good of mankind.

We herewith commit ourselves to these tasks and the privilege of working together as children in the family of God in the high and holy duty of growing food for the distant members of the family.

We herewith dedicate ourselves, our lives, and our sacred honor to the discharging of these duties knowing that life is of God and that God will never fail those who go forth in His Name to do His will.

Minister and People: Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven.

We laud and magnify Thy glorious Name.
Evermore praising Thee and saying:
Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory;
Glory be to Thee, O Lord most high. *Amen.*

Hymn: Such as, God Bless Our Native Land

Minister: Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and evermore. *Amen.*

Rural Life Consecration Service

The following Rural Life Consecration Service was prepared by the Rev. Fred E. Dean, pastor of the Greek Baptist Church, New York, and Chaplain of the New York State Grange, and used as a part of the Rural Life Sunday program in his church.

Leader: Let us remember before God all who till the soil, fearing not sweat, dropping over the eyes like tears, because of the oldest of all faiths, the conviction that God will provide.

People: O God, bless the work of our hands, and strengthen the purpose of our hearts. As we plough the fields and sow the seed in hope, may we by Thy grace come again with rejoicing, bearing a harvest with us.

Leader: Let us acknowledge unto God our debt to our helpers, the animals that serve our needs and draw our burdens, and share in pain and pleasure.

People: Unto Thee, O God, we give thanks for the friendly beasts that bless our rural life, for dog and horse, and for the cattle on a thousand hills, friends of our childhood, sharers of burdens, givers of food. Help us to treat them kindly, and to share with them as Thou dost prosper us.

Leader: Let us bring to God our homes and families.

People: O God, Creator and Governor of the universe, grant Thy guiding spirit to our leaders, and endow them with prudence and wisdom. Bless and prosper our churches, our schools, and the agencies which lead us forward. As we enlist through them in the service of our fellowmen, may we hear Thee say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

In Unison: And now, O God, bless the seed which we sow, the tools with which we work, the hands that labor and the souls that serve in ways of daily toil. And when our laboring days are past, bring us safely to our rest in Thee, through Jesus Christ our Savior. *Amen.*

A Service of Dedication to the Cause of Rural Life

This service was prepared by the author of this book, and used in the Rural Missions Conference at Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y., January 23, 1942. It may be used in rural life conferences, as a worship service for Rural Life Sunday, or on other rural life occasions.

¶ Let every worshipper bow his head in adoration and silent prayer.

Instrumental Prelude: Fairest Lord Jesus (Crusaders' Hymn)

Call to Worship

Leader:

In wonder workings, or some bush aflame
Men look for God and fancy Him concealed;
But in earth's common things He stands revealed
While grass and flowers and stars spell out His name.
The Heavens declare the glory of God,
And the firmament sheweth his handiwork.

People:

The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;
The world and they that dwell therein.

Leader:

O God of our salvation,
Thou art the confidence of all the ends of the earth.

People:

Thou visitest the earth and waterest it;
Thou waterest its furrows abundantly.
Thou settlest the ridges thereof,
Thou makest it soft with showers;
Thou blessest the springing thereof.

All:

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth.
Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts
His majestic splendor fills the whole earth.

The Invocation: Prayer of thanksgiving for this world, by Walter Rauschenbusch

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING FOR THIS WORLD

O God, we thank Thee for this universe, our great home; for its vastness and its riches, and for the manifoldness of the life which teems upon it and of which we are a part. We praise Thee for the arching sky and the blessed winds, for the driving clouds and the constellations on high. We praise Thee for the salt sea and the running water, for the everlasting hills, for the trees, and for the grass under our feet. We thank Thee for our senses by which we can see the splendor of the morning, and hear the jubilant songs of love, and smell the breath of the springtime. Grant us, we pray Thee, a heart wide open to all this joy and beauty, and save our souls from being so steeped in care or so darkened by passion that we pass heedless and unseeing when even the thornbush by the wayside is aflame with the glory of God.

Enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all the living things, our little brothers, to whom Thou hast given this earth as their home in common with us. We remember with shame that in the past we have exercised the high dominion of man with ruthless cruelty, so that the voice of the earth, which should have gone up to Thee in song, has been a groan of travail. May we realize that they live, not for us alone, but for themselves and for Thee, and that they love the sweetness of life even as we, and serve Thee in their place better than we in ours.

When our use of this world is over and we make room for others, may we not leave anything ravished by our greed or spoiled by our ignorance, but may we hand on our common heritage fairer and sweeter through our use of it, undiminished in fertility and joy, that so our bodies may return in peace to the great mother who nourished them and our spirits may round the circle of a perfect life in Thee.

Hymn of Adoration: Fairest Lord Jesus (Crusaders' Hymn)

A Confession of Faith. All read in unison: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.

The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside still waters. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

As the earth bringeth forth its bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord Jehovah will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall make them afraid: For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

And He that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness.

Meditation

A LITANY AND ACT OF DEDICATION

Minister: Let us give thanks to God:

For the beauty of Thy world, the glory of star-lit skies, the wonder of the changing seasons, the ever-new miracle of stirring life in field and forest,

People: We give Thee thanks, O God.

Minister: For the privilege of sharing with Thee in the act of creating the good things of earth for Thy children, and for Thy nearness in all the processes of agricultural life,

People: We give Thee thanks, O God.

Minister: For the Christ of the country road, who walked and served in the pleasant land of Galilee, and who today walks the country roads of the world in comradeship with all who till the soil,

People: We give Thee thanks, O God.

Minister: For the widening horizons of rural life, the open doors in which entering we may serve the rural peoples of the world, and walk the byways with Christ,

People: We give Thee thanks, O God.

Minister: That it may please Thee to grant us vision of an earth redeemed and used as a sacred trust for the welfare of all Thy great family on earth,

People: We beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord.

Minister: That all farmer folk in all lands may walk in joyous comradeship with Thee in the sowing and harvesting of their crops,

People: We beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord.

Minister: That the homes of country folk everywhere may be centers of serene, abundant and godly living,

People: We beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord.

Minister: That it may please Thee to guide and guard all children and youth in the rural areas of the world that they may come to be Thy true children,

People: We beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord.

Minister: That it may please Thee so to bless the rural churches of the world and inspire them with vision, so that their fellowship may be enriched and they may bring all rural peoples to Thee, into Thy great family,

People: We beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord.

Minister: That rural ministers and missionaries, and those institutions which train them may realize the greatness of their calling, and may dedicate themselves to the redemption of rural living in Thy name,

People: We beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord.

Minister: That it may please Thee speedily to grant a just and lasting peace in all the earth, that all peoples may again beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, that they may all live together in brotherhood and tranquillity in the lands Thou hast given unto them,

People: We beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord.

Minister: To the re-creation of the beloved community bound together by ties of godly brotherly love in every countryside, in

which all men shall share with joy in sowing the seed and reaping the harvest of the Kingdom of God,

People: We dedicate our hands and minds, O God.

Minister: To a renewed appreciation of the Holy Earth and its gifts, and to a consecrated stewardship of all its resources, material and human,

People: We dedicate our hands and minds, O Lord.

Minister: To comradeship with the rural folk of all the world, and to serving them devotedly with all the gifts and graces Thou hast vouchsafed unto us,

People: We dedicate our lives, O God.

All: Accept our thanksgiving, hear Thou our prayers and intercessions, graciously use the gifts of mind, body, and life which we now lay upon Thy altar, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer (In unison)

Hymn of Dedication: Where Winds the Road. (Germany, L.M.)

Where winds the road o'er hill and dale,
Where field and forest mark the land;
In all that thou dost man entail,
We see the imprint of Thy hand.

On furrow long, in village street,
By singing brook or cottage door,
In friendly word when neighbors meet,
We come to feel Thee more and more.

In winter's snow, in summer's sun,
The joy of spring, the hush of fall,
In all the course the seasons run,
We praise Thee as the Lord of all.

Thou Christ who lovest field and wood,
E'er sought new strength in quiet glen;
Help us who stand where Thou hast stood,
Come now and walk the fields again,

Till men in all Thy countryside,
Shall cease from want and greed and strife,
Shall learn in Thy way to abide,
The joy of more abundant life.

—Howard E. Mather

The Benediction

Dedication of a Tree

By John Kendrick Strong. First used in the Congregational Church of Beulah, N. D., Daily Vacation Church School, 1931.

¶ The group gathers around the tree in the shape of a cross, with the readers at the four inside corners.

Hymn: This Is My Father's World. (Terra Beata)

First Reader: We, the members of ————————, having come together to learn how to reconstruct our lives according to God's plan, and having studied and played and sung together in Christian friendliness, wish to continue that fellowship with God and with one another by dedicating ourselves to the protection and care of this little tree.

Second Reader: We want our lives to be straight and beautiful like trees. Knowing that we have to nourish them carefully lest they wither from spiritual drought or be bent or broken by thoughtless acts, we are now taking into our charge this tree, that as we guide and protect its growth we may be constantly reminded of the way we want to grow.

Third Reader: To hold together the common friendliness which this ———————— has enjoyed, and to develop a happy spirit of cooperation in the name of Jesus,

All: We dedicate our selves to the joyous care of this little tree.

Fourth Reader: To give recognition of our kinship with the wonderful world of nature, and of our interest in all things beautiful and lovely,

All: We dedicate ourselves to the faithful care of this little tree.

First Reader: To show our deep and lasting love for God our heavenly Father who made and loves everything good and noble, and to feel that we are working with Him in the beautifying and the improving of His kingdom,

All: We dedicate ourselves to the loving care of this little tree.

Second Reader recites Joyce Kilmer's—Trees

Third Reader: Let us all unite in prayer.

All: O God, our heavenly Father, Who hast formed all things beautiful, Who hast made the stars, the sun and moon, the flowers, birds, and trees, Who causest the rain to fall and the crops to grow, and Who livest in the hearts of our friends, bless us as we now use our wonderful privilege of working with Thee in Thy universe. Help us to watch over and protect this tree, that it may grow straight and tall and beautiful. Thus may it become a fitting symbol of the way Thou wouldest have us grow. *Amen.*

They Should Be Close to God

They should be close to God who plow the earth,
Tear up the briers and turn the nettles in,
Bank high the rich brown soil and smooth it down
And harrow paths for life, straight, firm and thin.
They should be men of faith and vision, all
Who sight in each torn, trampled plot a yield
Of sun-gold harvests; ears have they to hear
The secrets whispered by a growing field.
They should be gentle. Earth is soft as wool
Fresh turned, and rain is cool and sweet in spring;
Where crickets chirp and little wings hum praise
Men must be kind and love the smallest thing.
They seek and find the simple life—the bread
Of fields, the crystal waters of the stream;

A sheltered hut against the hills, a hearth
And warmth when winter comes and men would dream—
Dream once again of fields and growing things
When snows have gone and all the trembling clod
Wakes with the trumpeting of spring. Men know,
Who keep the fields, the miracles of God.

—Philip Jerome Cleveland

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The Farmer

As Thou didst set Thy first children in a garden
We know, O Lord, it is good for us
To learn the ways of seedtime and of harvest.
The earth Thou gavest is fruitful and fair to look upon
But the strong have often pushed aside the weak,
And the harvest has not been just.
We have often wasted the fruit of the land
And scorned the soil from which it sprang.
Amid the beauty of springing blade
Man-made ugliness has rested like a blight upon the land.
Tillers of the field are often cheated
By those who reap where they have not sown.
Grant that all who labor may have their share of tree,
and vine and field,
That children in remote places may not be neglected.
We plead forgiveness that amid fat plains and valleys
Any should go hungry, ill clad or homeless.
Help Thy servants
To establish men in plenty upon the goodly earth.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

—George Stewart

From "A Face to the Sky," *A Book of Prayers,*
Association Press, 1940. Used by permission of the publisher.

CHAPTER V

HOME DEDICATION SERVICES

A Service of Dedication of a Chinese Village Home

Dedicating a Home in Africa

Service for the Dedication of the Home in India

Consecration of a House

Suggestions for the Observance of the Christian Home Festival

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WHEN *a new home is built, or when a young married couple starts out together in a home of their own, one of the most significant and effective methods of securing right Christian atmosphere from the beginning is to have a service of dedication. Such services are now being used in many parts of the world. The services and descriptions here given are but scattered examples of many good and beautiful services of dedication which have been sent in from many lands.*

A Service of Dedication of a Chinese Village Home

By Elmer W. Galt

¶ The house, whether newly built or old, should be made clean and fresh, and all its contents neat and orderly. In the room where people gather let there be, if possible, at least a picture of the Holy Family, also other suitable Christian pictures and symbols. Let modest decorations of flowers and of produce from field and garden and trees be added.

At the time appointed let all the family be present, with the pastor and a suitable company of nearest friends and neighbors. The family should be made familiar in advance with the order of service and the part they are to have in it. The service may well be modified at any point to make it more fitting for the particular family. An elder or deacon or other church leader might conduct the service.

Opening Words: If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. John 14: 23.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. Psalms 133: 1.

Hymn

Scripture: Eph. 2: 19–22, 6: 1–4. (Or other as the pastor may choose)

Pastoral Talk: (At his discretion. If given it is suggested that it be not longer than 6 or 8 minutes)

GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Pastor: Gathered here in the presence of God and of each other, we acknowledge that we are children of God and that our real home is the home of the Spirit, we in Him and He in us, wherever we may be.

Family: We thank God for assurance that He tabernacles with men.

Pastor: We acknowledge also that God is the Creator and Pro-

vider of all things needed for our present comfort. This house has been built by human skill and labor. But the skill was from God, the strength to labor was from Him, and every bit of material used was of His creation.

Family: We thank God for this house.

Pastor: For every article in the house: furniture, cooking utensils, articles both for use and for ornament,

Family: We are thankful unto God.

Pastor: For the court-yard with its (Here let him improvise, e.g., fruit and shade trees, potted plants, beds of flowers, storehouse and sheds, pets and animals, farming implements).

Family: We thank our God.

Pastor: For ties that bind us as a family to live here together, and for fellowship with kind friends in other homes about us,

Family: We thank our God.

Hymn

The Family's Covenant: (To be read by the head of the household, if he can read and is willing. Otherwise by the pastor, who will call for assent at the close.)

As a family, blessed of God our Father, and privileged to make this our home, we covenant before God and you who are our friends,

To make this a place

Of mutual love and forbearance between man and wife.

Of solicitous care for the welfare of the aged.

Of nurture of children into early habits and attitudes that are truly Christian.

Of counsel and guidance for maturing youth, that they may voluntarily commit their lives to discipleship of Jesus.

To make it a place

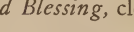
Of such sharing and kindness and service, within the home and out into the community, as will help to establish a brotherhood of God's children, each solicitous for the welfare of the others.

Of such reverence and worship as will acknowledge the presence of God all the while as the unseen head of the household, under whom we are stewards of all that we have and are.

Family: We do all heartily make these our vows.

Prayer of Dedication and Blessing, closing with the Lord's Prayer

Benediction



Dedicating a Home in Africa

By MATHILDE T. DYSART, Chikore, East Africa

¶ We have been slow to acknowledge that many native customs are both sacred and beautiful, and that it will strengthen the church and its members if we adopt some of them, possibly without the usual bringing of gifts and feasting.

Recently a group of 150 people assembled to dedicate the new teacher's home at Bangira, one of the outstation schools. Thunder and heavy clouds kept many away, but some came who live from eight to ten miles distant, many with babies on their backs.

The shower came during the singing of the first hymn, a good sign, said many. We did not mind, for the rain was badly needed. Shelter was sought in one of the school buildings where the program continued. In his opening remarks the African pastor said:

> This is nothing new. We all know this custom of dedicating a new home. We know that our forefathers never moved into a new home without first asking for the blessing and the protection of the Great Spirit and the family Spirit. We know that they also had other customs which were good and helpful. They never chose a new building site without invoking the guidance of the Great Spirit and His helpers. They also did this when the name was given to a new baby. Many other customs they had which were also good. Some of them had parts which were not so good, as when the medicine man was called in to do his part. But we must not condemn them, for they lived up to the

light they had. And now that we are re-adopting this beautiful custom of dedicating a new home, let us see to it that we live up to the light we have.

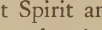
The shower passed during the program. At its conclusion we took up the singing of another hymn while marching around the two school buildings and back to the new home. It was an inspiring sight as we looked back upon the crowd, all dressed in their Sunday best. The deep voices of the men and boys in the rear came rolling in like heavy breakers on the beach.

"Why haven't we done this before?" queried some.

"We must do it again," said others.

Another custom which we may soon adopt is that of bringing the young bride to the Great Spirit and the family Spirit for an introduction and a blessing at the time of marriage. The Head of the Kraal says as he presents the new member:

> Here is our new daughter, O Great Spirit. Bless her and protect her. Help her to be happy here with us. May she know how to give as well as to receive and to be a real daughter in the family.



Service for the Dedication of the Home in India

From *The Festival of the Christian Home,* 1942-1943, National Christian Council of India, Nagpur, C. P.

¶ The house having been cleaned, decorated and beautified, inside and out, lights should be placed in different places ready for lighting at the appropriate time. A central place should be made ready for the service with chairs or mats in a family circle. In the centre there might be a picture of Christ, perhaps a new one to be dedicated and placed on the wall later. There should be a receptacle for gifts and as much decoration in the way of flowers, lights, etc., as possible.

When the family have assembled the following brief service may be used.

Leader: Peace be to this house and all who dwell in it. *Amen.*

Hymn of Praise: (Any well-known hymn may be chosen)

Leader: Let us remain in silence and remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is present with us.

Silence

Leader: God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

Let us thank and praise the Lord Who came down to earth for us.

Leader:

For Thy humble birth in a stable,

After each sentence all repeat: We praise Thee, O Lord.

For Thy love of Mary, Thy Mother,
For Thy home in the village at Nazareth,
For Thy work in the carpenter's shop,
For Thy blessing on the wedding at Cana,
For Thy visits to the house of Martha and Mary,
For Thy fellowship with simple, humble people,
For Thy love of little children,

Heavenly Father, we thank Thee that Thy Son, Jesus Christ, was born in an earthly home, such as this one. Bless this house and all who dwell in it. Grant that it may be full of peace and love. May our Lord Jesus Christ abide with us always. *Amen.*

Bible Reading: John 4: 46–54

Leader: Let us pray for God's forgiveness.

¶ After the mention of each sin there should be a pause for remembrance and penitence.

Let us remember before God the times that we have sinned . . . . our quarrels, ... our lack of love, ... our selfishness, ... our disobedience, ... our failure to serve one another.

I will arise and go to my Father and say unto Him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee.

Let us confess our sins to God saying all together:

O God, our Father; we have sinned against Thee in thought, word, and deed. Have mercy upon us and forgive us our sins. Strengthen us against temptation and help us to overcome our faults, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

Let us pray for this family
For those at home. . . .
For those away from home. . . .

¶ Mention each member of the family by name, pausing after each name for silent prayer. Then let the leader and other members of the family pray in their own words, giving thanks for special blessings received and praying for special needs.

Let us pray together God's family prayer
Our Father . . . .

THE THANK-OFFERING

¶ During the singing of this hymn each member of the family shall bring an offering to the place already prepared.

Take our life and let it be
Consecrated Lord to Thee:
Take our moments and our days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take our hands and let them move,
Working always for Thy love,
Take our voices, let us sing,
Always, only, for our King.

Take our silver and our gold,
Not a mite would we withhold,
Take our hearts, they are Thine own,
Let them be Thy royal throne.
Take our lives, O Lord, we pour
At Thy feet our treasure store:
Take ourselves and we will be,
Ever, only, all for Thee.

At the close of the hymn the following prayer shall be said: Heavenly Father, Giver of all good things; accept our gifts, and bless them in Thy service, for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

THE CEREMONY OF THE LIGHTS

¶ During the singing of this hymn the whole family shall proceed in procession round the house, lighting the lights wherever they have been placed.

Hymn: As with Gladness Men of Old

¶ All shall return to the place of prayer and the service shall close as follows:

Christ is the Light of the world. *Amen.*
Christ is the Light of this house. *Amen.*
Christ is the Light of our hearts. *Amen.*

O loving Father, we dedicate this, our family, to Thee and Thy service. Bless us and keep us at all times and in all places. Give us joyful hearts and teach us always to serve Thee. Make this a truly Christian household. May it be a light shining in the darkness for a witness to Thee. And do Thou lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us now and always. *Amen.*

Consecration of a House

This account of the ceremonies used in the consecration of building a house in Tinnevelly, India, is taken from *Worship in Other Lands,* by H. P. THOMPSON, (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, London) and is used by permission of the publishers.

¶ When the foundations have been dug, and the first stones are to be laid, the family and workmen all stand round the excavations. Extempore prayer is said, and the priest (or maybe the catechist) lays the first stone. Next the father of the family lays

a stone, then any near male relative who is present, then the mother and any grown-up children. Each says a few words of prayer before laying a stone.

When the house is finished, there is a ceremony of dedication, to which special friends of the family are invited. A fire is first lighted upon the hearth, and milk is boiled on it, in a new pot. As soon as the milk has boiled, prayers are said and the house is blessed—the form of words is left to the person who conducts the service. Then the milk is handed round to the chief guests, and plantains are also given.

After eating, all sit down and sing lyrics for a time. Betel and areca nut are then distributed, and one by one the guests take their leave. After this the household move in all their belongings and take up residence.

Suggestions for the Observance of the Christian Home Festival

From *The Festival of the Christian Home,* 1942-1943, National Christian Council of India, Nagpur, C. P.

A. IN THE HOME

1. Preparation

a) *Cleanliness.* During the week preceding the festival the house should be thoroughly cleaned, inside and out. Any accumulation of rubbish should be turned out and burned. Old or unwanted clothes, etc., might be given away to poorer neighbors. Village homes might be newly whitewashed, the floors freshly done with cowdung, and decorated with patterns if that is the custom. There should be no cobwebs in roof or corners. The surroundings of the house too should be neatly swept, all rubbish taken away and no stagnant water left lying. In fact it is a golden opportunity for the general clean up of the Christian hamlet.

b) *Beauty.* As far as possible the home should be decorated and beautified. It would be nice if a new picture could be bought.

There is a good selection of colored pictures produced by the Lucknow Press at a reasonable amount each which are available from many Christian Book Depots. There is a beautiful rural picture of The Christ of the Indian Home available from the N. C. C., price 2 pice. Or there is a new colored poster of the Virgin and Child, price 1 anna, to be obtained from the Christian Literature Society. Families which can afford to pay a little more might get any one of the pictures of the Life of Christ by Elsie Anna Wood, also in color. Family photographs could be garlanded and in each house a receptacle for offerings cleaned and prepared. Where there is a garden some special plant might be grown ready for the day or a new tree planted. More especially arrangements should be to have as many lights as possible, both inside and out, to be lighted up after dark. The little village earthen ware saucers with a piece of rag twisted into a wick burning in castor oil are both easy and cheap to provide.

2. Family Gatherings

Wherever possible there should be family gatherings. Married sons or daughters might return to their parents' home taking their children with them. In villages where so often different members of one family are living side by side it should be possible for them to gather together for at least one family meal to which each household could contribute something. In fact it might prove an occasion on which family quarrels could be healed. Children at school or grown-up sons and daughters away from home should be encouraged to write a greeting to the family party.

3. Family Ceremonies

These may take various forms as follows:

a) An act of family worship.

b) The re-dedication of the home, with the family going round in procession singing.

c) The lighting of the lights, a symbolic act in which the children especially should take part to signify that Christ is the Light of the home.

d) Entertainment by the children, i.e., singing, reciting, acting, bhajanas, kolatum, games, etc.

B. IN THE CHURCH

1. Preparation

Churches, prayer-houses, schools, any building in which Christian worship takes place, should be cleaned and decorated and as far as possible this should be a joint undertaking of men, women and children. Palm leaves, branches, garlands, lights, etc., can usually be obtained at little or no cost if people are prepared to take trouble. If individual families cannot afford to buy a new picture for their own house, perhaps several of them might contribute to buy one for the Church.

2. Thanksgiving Services

a) Services of Holy Communion at which there are special prayers, offerings and addresses.

b) Special Services, for which several forms for different types of worship will be found in this book on pages 13, 17, 21.

It is suggested that at such services the families might, as far as possible, sit together, the boys with the father and the girls with the mother.

3. Thank-Offerings

These may be in money or in kind and should be given a prominent place in the service. It is suggested that each family should come up in turn, bringing their offering, as at a harvest festival. It should be emphasized that these offerings are a token of thanksgiving for the blessings of family life and, with the consent of the pastor, each congregation, group of congregations, or church (according to the custom prevailing in that body) might decide to what object the thank-offering should be devoted.

4. Processions

These could proceed round the Christian houses, with pauses for special prayer where there are sick people, newly born babies, or where there has recently been bereavement. They can also go

through the non-Christian quarters, as an act of witness, if desired. These are specially suitable for village congregations.

C. IN THE COMMUNITY

It is very important that, while centering chiefly in the home, and finding its first expression in the Church, this festival should also extend to the Christian community as a whole and if possible to the non-Christian world outside. The following are suggestions as to how this may be carried out in the larger centres:

1. Special meetings for fathers and mothers together, with talks on topics in which the co-operation of both parents is needed, i.e., Family Worship, Sunday Observances, Training of Children, Understanding of Adolescence, Christian Marriage Arrangements, Family Budgets, etc., etc.

2. Open Meetings for non-Christian women on subjects dealing with home life but without a specifically Christian bias. Health, Hygiene, Diet, and to some extent the Training of Children, would provide such topics.

3. Inspection of Christian homes with prizes for cleanliness, order and beauty, graded according to the circumstances and opportunities of the home involved.

4. Plays and pageants dealing with any aspect of family life.

5. Christian Home Exhibitions containing handwork, models, pictures, cooking, sewing, etc.

Man and His House

There are old trails across the life of man. One of the very oldest is that trail which leads to his shelter. Night comes and man, who has been all day at his work in the world, goes home. There are his wife, his children, his food and his fire. Therefore man has ever loved his shelter.

But whether the house is of clay or of bark or of brick or of stone—or of whatever material—the man who has made it has loved it. Some of us have heard the glad singing of a man and

his friends as they have brought home from the forest the roof-tree of his new house. Some of us have heard the dancing and the drumming when a man's friends have trodden down the clay floor of his new house. Think of all the customs we know with which man has honoured the building of his house, and shall not a prayer to God be such a custom?

PRAYER: O God, we thank Thee for the end of our labour and for the finishing of this house we have built. By Thy life in us we have had the wisdom and the strength for the work of building. All the material in the house is from Thee. Before we began to build, behold Thou didst go before us in the way, making for us what we would need to build our house. Now we ask Thee to bless Thy children who will live under this roof. May Thy hand be over us, like the roof of this house. May Thy care be around us, like the walls of this house. May we love one another in this house, and may we love Thee. Then shall this house be blessed both in Thy sight and before the eyes of the people of this town. *Amen.*

—JEAN MACKENZIE

Thanksgiving for Water

Wherever man is to live, water must be there also. To every living man God gives water, be it ever so little. A fine spring is the pride of a village. Those who travel where there is no water carry it with them, else they must die and their bones bleach in that dry land. Passing through a proper village, the thirsty traveller will beg water from the woman in her house, and she will give it to the stranger, though the spring be far and the water heavy.

Jesus Himself spoke of the kindness there is in the gift of a cup of water, and there is a Christian way of giving water to the thirsty. Water is an old thing; there was water on earth before the coming of man. In giving His children water, God has given them life and power. There is great power in the rushing of water and in the stream of water, as every schoolboy knows. We have not yet learned all the work that water can do for man, but every

human being knows many kind ways and uses of water, and the Bible is full of the praise of it.

PRAYER: O God, we rejoice in the rain. We rejoice in the clear water of the spring. We rejoice in the great water of the river. We thank Thee that Thou hast remembered us with the gift of waters. We thank Thee that Thou dost send Thy servant, the water, to save Thy children from drought and from thirst. We drink Thy water and we thank Thee. We bathe in Thy water and we thank Thee. Our seed in the ground lives by the fall of Thy rain; we thank Thee. And if anywhere today, in any field or village, Thy water fails Thy children, remember them in mercy, we pray Thee. Send Thy servant, the rain, to visit them, and cause Thy children to be glad in the fall of Thy beautiful water. For Jesus' sake. *Amen.*

—JEAN MACKENZIE

Thanksgiving for Light

There is a child who, when the moon shines, rejoices greatly. There is a traveller who likes to walk in moonlight. There is an old person who sits gladly in sunlight. There is a man who has long desired to carry his own lantern, and tonight he carries it. And there is a woman who is glad because at last there is a lamp in her house. There is a chief whose house is bright with electricity.

This is a prayer for all such people who desire to give God thanks for light.

PRAYER: Our Father God, we thank Thee for all lights that light our days. We consider the moon and the stars which Thou hast made. We thank Thee for starlight, for moonlight, for great and strong sunlight. We thank Thee for warm firelight and the lamp in our house and the lantern in our hand. All light comes from Thee, who art the Father of Lights. And we pray Thee that Thy Word may be a lamp for our feet and light on our way. For Jesus' sake. *Amen.*

—JEAN MACKENZIE

CHAPTER VI

SERVICES OF REMEMBRANCE

All Saints' Day
An All-Saints'-Day Service in China
Halo Sunday
Parents' Day in China

IT IS *quite understandable that some of the best material for such a chapter should come from China, where there is in the national culture such a reverence for ancestors. The fine traits of this reverence are being brought over into the Christian Church. No less beautiful is the observance of All Saints' Day in the little mission school in Northern Rhodesia described so eloquently by Miss Shaw.*

All Saints' Day

This description of a hauntingly beautiful All Saints' Day service in a Northern Rhodesia Girls' School is taken from *God's Candlelights,* by MABEL SHAW.[1]

¶ "We shall light the candles soon," they said to me one morning, and my heart leapt to the words. God would come to us at the lighting of the candles. All Saints' Day came. The chapel was made beautiful with flowers, and when night fell, the children came quietly, expectantly. Each one on entering was given a little unlighted candle. Only the quiet padding of little bare feet was heard, and now and again an indrawn breath of wonder. It was very beautiful, the most beautiful we could offer.

On the altar table covered with its fair white linen were flowers white and red, and the tender green of ferns. Amongst them were many lighted candles. Under the chapel lamp there was a low stand surrounded by flowers and ferns, and on it stood a tall ivory candlestick, in the midst of white roses and crimson lilies. In all the windows there were lighted candles and flowers. The children's faces as they entered were lit up with awe and joy. They had come to meet with the Chief and all his people.

We knelt and sang:

O Chief, our Light, shine in upon us now.

Then standing, we said all the Chief's words about light. They sat and we talked of it.

"I am the Light of the world." That one tall candle standing amidst the flowers was His, the Chief's, who came bringing the light of God to earth.

Those to whom He first gave the light, St. Paul who carried it far: we found their candles on the altar table.

Then the great army of the saints and martyrs, high and lifted up like their Lord: we had their candles.

The tiny little candles amidst the flowers and ferns were those of the little children martyrs whose hands held the Light unfalteringly through the ways of life and death. We heard the

1 Used by permission of the publisher, The Friendship Press, New York.

greatly loved story of little Tarsicius once again. All, all of them passed before us, pressed in upon us, all the great tribe of the Lightbearers, the Communion of Saints.

And to us has come the Light, into our hands it has been given, passing from hand to hand through all the ages. And now it is for us to carry it through our day and generation, to fall into our places in the great procession and to follow on. Never to lay it down, to guard that Light as our very lives, never to let the Light go out, and then at the end, to hand it on as we pass into the radiant realm where there is no need of sun or candlelight, "for God himself is the Light thereof."

It seemed as if there was no need for words, we were all seeing together, caught up by the glory of the vision. The still rapt faces of the children, the silence throbbing before us, the trembling of our hearts as we waited: these things, not words, were the realities.

Now came the sacramental lighting of our own little candles from the one standing alone. Mwenya and I went first, for we are the seniors of the school community. Then the others, one by one. Not even the moving feet of the children broke the silence. The little ones knelt waiting their turn with eager shining eyes.

Hands trembled with eagerness and stress of feeling. Quietly they sang, "Who are these like stars appearing?"

At last, all the candles lighted, we stood, and from one side came the question, "Who are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence come they?" The other side made answer. We sang the Hymn of Light:

O Light of the Great God
Which has shined in our darkness—
Lord of Life—
Light for us the Fire of Life
In this our House of Prayer.
O Lord—look upon us,
We lift to Thee our lamps,
Even our hearts,
Let them be lit up with Thy Light.
Great God of all goodness,

Lord of Life,
Spirit of Holiness,
Thou art worthy to be worshipped by all men.
Great Lord—we children worship—
We children worship—
We kneel before Thee,
We worship, we worship.

They knelt and bent forward for the last verse. Then we made our thanksgiving for all the Saints, those we know by name, and all the others, those still on earth with us whose love and prayer encircle this school as with light itself. And last of all our own, our very own, the children of this house who have gone on ahead into the land of Light and abundant Life—Mary Mwamba and her little son Michael, Agnes Chipola and her little son Wilfred, Malita, Margaret Chitoshi, Kabesi, Kapaya.

At each name the children lifted high their candles.

We rose and went out singing, "The Son of God goes forth to war." Mwenya stayed there kneeling.

I went to the chapel door. The children crossed the courtyard, each one intent on guarding her candle flame. Half-way over, the leaders stood still, and the rest gathered round; then without one word or sigh, almost as one, that company of children looked up to the stars and lifted high their candles. They lowered them and passed in silence to their houses.

I went back into the chapel to Mwenya and knelt with her. She said brokenly: "If only I could go now with my candle in my hand there would be no fear. Pray for me that I go now." I prayed for us both that we had lighted God's candles in the hearts of His children.

She was silent for a long time, then she spoke. "I have never seen it before. God's world is so near. Why did I ever fear? And how beautiful it is! And they are our friends, we belong to them."

I went to say good-night to the teachers. They were sitting quietly. "We don't want to speak, we want to remember it always."

It was the same in the school houses, where the big girls were sitting up. "We don't want to sleep, we want to see it all in our hearts."

Chomba followed me to the door of her house.

"You said the other morning the Chief would come to us. He has come, and with the Great Ones of His Kingdom."

Next morning I called one of them and said:

"Why did you stand still in the middle of the yard last night and lift your candles?"

"Did you not see the stars?" she asked. "We thought they in the spirit-world were lowering their lamps to us, and so we lifted ours to them in greeting."

An All-Saints'-Day Service in China

"O Blest Communion, Fellowship Divine"

This service is adapted from a description of the service by ELLEN M. STUDLEY, in the *Religious Education Fellowship Bulletin,* Autumn, 1940, published in Shanghai. The service was held November, 1939, in the Hall of Worship of Peking Union Bible Training Institute for Women. It may be used, with such changes as may be desired in each country, or each community or denomination.

Has it not been in the genius of the Chinese people to weld links with family ancestors? Has the church done enough to show honor in a Christian way to those whose memory we cherish?—Why should not all branches of the Christian faith join in commemorating the saints of the Church universal and eternal, and reap the reward of deepened appreciation of our priceless heritage?

The service, while carefully planned, and ritualistic in outline, was spontaneous in content. The participation of the students was unpracticed.

¶ In the Hall of Worship, the altar-table was covered with candles, large and small, high and low. The great, tall, central candle alone was lit, for Jesus Christ.

Processional Hymn: (Sine Nomine)

O may Thy soldiers, faithful, true and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,

And win with them the victor's crown of gold.
Alleluia!

¶ Introductory statement by the leader, about the universality of the day.

Thou wast their rock, their fortress and their might,
Thou, Lord, their Captain in the well-fought fight,
Thou, in the darkness drear, their one true light—
Alleluia!

THE FORERUNNERS OF CHRIST. Candles behind and below Christ's were lit, with a quotation from a word about such forerunners of Christ as John the Baptist, Isaiah, Moses, Confucius, Buddha.

THE SAINTS OF THE EARLY CHURCH. Candles lit near to Christ's for John, Mary the Mother of Jesus, Peter, James, the writers of the Gospels, Paul, Timothy, Lydia, etc.

Reading: Rev. 7: 9–17. (Verse chanted to a Chinese tune)

THE GREAT LEADERS OF THE CHURCH. Candles lit for Augustine, Monica, Ambrose, St. Francis Xavier, Wesley, Luther, etc.

THE PIONEERS OF THE GOSPEL IN CHINA. The next tier of candles was lit for Morrison, Leung Faat, Pastor Hsu, Bishop Scherewschewsky, the Shansi martyrs, etc. A prayer of Thanksgiving was offered for those heroes who brought Christ to China.

THOSE WHO BROUGHT THE LIGHT TO US. Each person lit a candle for the person who had held open for her the door of the Kingdom—a grandmother, a teacher, a beloved pastor, missionaries, etc., were mentioned by name with tenderness and gratitude.

O may Thy soldiers, faithful, true and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
And win with them the victor's crown of gold.
Alleluia!

WE LIGHT CANDLES FOR OURSELVES. Each student lit a small candle for herself, as a symbol of her prayer and desire to be included in

this glorious company. All stood to form a circle of light, and sang with awe,

O blest communion, fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
Yet all are in Thee, for all are Thine.
Alleluia!

Prayer: (Book of Common Prayer, collect for All Saints' Day)
O Almighty God, Who hast knit together Thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; grant us grace so to follow Thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which Thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Recessional: Rev. 7: 12 (chanted in chorus)

Halo Sunday

This service of recognition of the aged members of a congregation was used in the Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, Franklin, Indiana. All members over seventy years of age were guests of honor in the service. The service was suited to the tastes of these veterans of the church, and most parts of it were led by older people.

Organ Prelude

Hymn: Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing—Wyeth

Invocation

Responsive Reading: Ecclesiastes 12: 1–13

Hymn: Rock of Ages—Hastings

Scripture Reading: Psalm 130

Morning Prayer and Choral Response

Quartet: Have Thine Own Way—Stebbins
(By a group over sixty years of age)

Recognition of Honored Members

Reception of Offering

Organ Offertory

Sermon: De Profundis

Hymn: Sweet By and By—Webster

Benediction and Quiet

Organ Postlude

HALO SUNDAY

We honor today those thirty-eight members of our church who have attained the age of three score and ten. We congratulate these people, thank them for their faithful service to the Church and Kingdom, and wish for them many more years in the service of the Master here on earth.

Grow old along with me
The best is yet to be
The last of life for which
the first was made.

The response to the Sunday was far beyond expectations. It is true that a little child shall lead them and that you can bring the parents to church by putting the children in a program. It is equally true that you can touch the hearts of men and women in a way that will never be forgotten by a kind deed to their aged parents.

Parents' Day in China

This description of a Parents' Day service comes from Pastor Cheo Yu-wen, of Chuchow, Anhwei, China, who planned and conducted it.

¶ The Parents' Day service observed by the Chuchow church on May 11 added greatly to the Christian spirit of our homes. Fifty-nine families, all sitting as family groups, but also as members of the one family of God in His church, brought their tribute of adoration and praise to the Father in Heaven. After Pastor Cheo mentioned the names of parents and revered older people who had gone on, including Dr. Osgood, the missionary, the Rev. Shih Kwei-biao and others, two members of the congregation offered prayer in memory of them. Two younger members of the church then offered prayer for the living parents who are now carrying the burden of the work of the church. Then, while the entire congregation stood with bowed heads, Pastor Sheo prayed for the young people of the church who have dedicated themselves to Christian service both in the church and in their business.

At the conclusion of the service, each member was given a piece of red paper cut in the shape of a fruit. All returned to the afternoon service bringing their paper fruits with names of the fruits of the spirit of God written upon them. After the afternoon service, there was a period of recreation and a reception. There were folk games, and the young people dramatized the story of the Prodigal Son.

At the end of the day, the congregation went home with the resolution to lead all members of their families to Christ, and to be obedient children of the Father in Heaven.

A Hymn for the Country Church

Tune: Holley or other L.M. tune

O thou Who workest hitherto
  Through sun and rain, in flock or tree,
We sow and reap and plow anew,
  Rejoicing thus to work with Thee.

We meet Thee in our fertile fields;
  We see Thee in the brooding sky;
Thou givest what our tillage yields;
  Our happy homes reveal Thee nigh.

O Thou Whose rest is evermore,
  Transcending all that Thou hast made,
We, on our day of rest, adore
  And feel Thy Presence, unafraid!

Our hearts respond to throbbing bell;
  Our souls rise like the eager spire;
We gather in these walls to tell
  Thy boundless love, our deep desire.

Like Him Who in unselfish toil
  Revealed on Earth the Life Divine,
May we revere the very soil,
  And serve in life each child of Thine!

With Thee Who openest Thy hand
  To satisfy all living things,
We feed the cities of our land;
  Their rivers have with us their springs.

Redeem our rural life from care,
  From blindness to its mission high!
May all who sow plow first with prayer!
  May all who harvest know Thee nigh!

—Edward Tallmadge Root

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CHAPTER VII

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

The Festival of Lights
An African Christmas Service
Carols in Africa

APPARENTLY *little has been done to develop truly indigenous celebration of the great historic festivals of the Christian year. Little material was found which seemed to be truly indigenous material used in the celebration of Christmas, and practically none for Easter, Pentecost, and the lesser festivals of the year.*

Christmas is celebrated more universally than any other Christian festival. How the imagination kindles as one thinks of the celebration of the birth of the Redeemer and the coming of the Shepherds and the Magi among the peoples of the far lands of the earth. Think of the starlit Christmas Eve under the velvet of an African sky, the throngs of Indian villagers lighting their candles to symbolize the coming of the Light of the World to India, the drama and pageantry of celebration in North and South America, and across Europe. Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas tonight. Rural people everywhere find joy in bringing their gifts of adoration and praise to the feet of the infant Redeemer.

The Festival of Lights

This Christmas service was prepared and used by the Rev. William S. Taylor at Indore, Central India, among Christians from rural areas. It is based on the Service of Lights used in the Greek Church at the time of the Nativity, even before the celebration of Christmas became an established custom in the Western Church.

¶ At the beginning of the service the Church is fully lighted. When the people are seated, and the proper time has come, the choir marches in, coming slowly up the centre aisle, singing as they come, and take their place at the front of the Church. They have unlighted candles in their hands, but these are not displayed. Or the unlighted candles may be left in their seats for them to get as they reach the front. The next few items of the service, down to the reading of John 1: 1–5, may be varied to suit local conditions, and may follow the ordinary order of service. They should be arranged, however, so as to give the congregation some part in the service, as they will take little active share in the latter part. The following items are merely suggestions:

Invocation

Hymn: A Christmas hymn with the whole congregation joining in

Responsive Reading

Recitation of the Disciples' Creed and the Lord's Prayer: (in unison)

Prayer of Adoration and of Thanksgiving to God for the Gift of His Son

Hymn: A Christmas hymn with the whole congregation joining in. At this point, the lights in the Church are dimmed, and from here on the order of service should be followed closely.

Address: The Minister briefly speaks on some such theme as I Am the Light of the World, showing how in Christ the Light of God came into the darkness of the world. He will finish by saying, We will now read the story of how this Light came into the world, or words to that effect.

Old Testament Reading: A passage or passages, e.g., from Isaiah, dealing with the coming of the Christ.

New Testament Reading: St. John 1: 1–5, 9–14

℄ At the words "And the Word became flesh," a large candle placed either on the altar or on a table at the front, is lighted. This is to represent the light of Christ.

Hymn: Choir only, one verse of O Come All Ye Faithful, or some such hymn.

℄ It would be best to have this memorized, as the light in the Church is too dim to read by, and the use of torches throws lights over the walls and ceiling that are distracting.

New Testament Reading: Matthew 2: 1–11

℄ During the Scripture reading a star, suspended over the altar, is lit.

Offering

℄ Immediately after the Scripture is finished, three wise men march up the central aisle of the Church, from the doorway, singing as they come We Three Kings of Orient Are, and bringing their gifts. When they reach the front each one sings the verse appropriate to him, and lays his gift at the altar. Either during the course of this song, or immediately afterwards, the offering of the congregation is taken up. The wise men walk down the aisle to meet the people bringing the offering, take it from them, bring it to the front, and lay it at the altar with their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They then withdraw.

New Testament Reading: Matthew 9: 13–18

¶ As each disciple's name is called, he comes forward and lights his candle. No candle is lit for Judas, buts Acts 1: 23–26 is read and Matthias comes forward and lights the twelfth candle.

Hymn

¶ Choir only, one verse or two of a song of dedication. As before, this should, if possible, be memorized.

New Testament Reading: Acts 26: 13–18

¶ Paul comes forward and lights his candle. The minister explains how the elders of the Church get their light from the apostles, and how from them it has spread to all peoples of all lands. The elders come forward and light their candles from the twelve disciples, who have remained standing in a row at the front. The choir may here sing another verse of a hymn, if desired. The Minister pronounces the Benediction.

The choir, the disciples, the elders, and as many of the congregation as know the words sing some well-known hymn, such as Onward Christian Soldiers, or The Morning Light Is Breaking. The congregation remains in their places during the singing of the hymn, but at the first words the choir starts to march out, lighting their candles from those of the elders as they pass in front of them, similarly holding their candle high.

When the elders and disciples have reached the door, the lights of the Church may be turned on, and the congregation may pass out. The elders and disciples, and perhaps the choir also, will by that time be waiting at the doors, and will give to every person as he passes out a candle, which he will light from those held by the elders and the disciples. In this way the symbolism will be carried a stage further. Many people will carry these candles home to their houses, there to light other candles around their house.

1) Candles—One large candle, and many packets of small candles which can be bought in packets of 50 for a few annas per packet.

2) A Star—This can be easily made from a small box covered with black paper, with a small star cut in the side, and covered on the inside with white tissue paper so that the electric light bulb (if electricity is used) will not be visible. If there is no electricity, some other device must be used.

3) Costumes—These are only necessary in the case of the three wise men.

4) People must be selected and trained beforehand for the choir and the disciples.

5) Cardboard bases in which the candles of the disciples and the elders may be fixed—to catch the dripping wax. The general symbolism is very easy to follow, and the effect of the lighted candles in the dim church, and in the dark compound outside when all the people are carrying them, is very beautiful.

¶ If preferred, (1) the Church need not be dimmed until after the short address, or (2) the address may be placed just after Paul lights his candle. In this case the disciples leave their lights on the table during the course of the address, take their seats, and after the address come up and get their lights again. This seems a rather unsatisfactory arrangement however.

An African Christmas Service

This service comes from Northern Rhodesia. It is described in *God's Candlelights* by Mabel Shaw.[1] We have kept the description of it in Miss Shaw's beautiful language, so that the atmosphere of beauty and devotion may be caught by the reader. The service could well be reproduced in a rural setting anywhere in the world.

¶ It was Christmas Eve and in their own school village that very evening there was to be the great act of worship of the Christmas

[1] Used by permission of the publisher, The Friendship Press, New York.

season, a gathering of the Tribe to greet its Chief. The rain did not come, but during the late afternoon the clouds banked up and looked threatening.

Chief Kasembe came in with his drums and a great crowd of people, and they went to the village to wait there until the school bell should call them.

As the sun set and lit up the smouldering clouds, quietness came upon the children, and a sense of expectancy. The school courtyard was all ready, the nsaka was formed into the outer room of the Inn at Bethlehem. The sky grew black, and blacker, but we went quietly on with our preparations, and when we were ready, and all the children dressed for their parts, we rang the bell.

The children say it has another cry on Christmas Eve, it says "Come—come—come to the Chief."

We lit up the nsaka. In a few minutes the people were pressing in. Gentle rain fell, but it did not deter them. And then the chief came. There was a movement and stir as his bells and beads jangled, he was taken to his place, and the rapidly increasing audience sat down.

The children were sitting in school, very still.

"The rain will stop, we know it will."

I went out again and looked up. Through a cloud rift gleamed a star. An old man pointed to it. "The rain will pass," he said, "it is going down the valley."

"Ask the chief," the children begged.

I summoned up courage, and stooped down by his side.

"We want to know, chief, if the rain will stop."

He flicked his fly-switch towards the sky. "It will pass—it passes now"—and it did.

We began. If it could have been a more beautiful service than other years, then it was. The stars just beamed light upon us, and all the little golden lamps glowed like the worshipping hearts of joyous children. We know nothing of Christmas stockings here, neither do we have Christmas trees. All our trees bear God's gifts to us, the kindly cooling shelter of leaves, forest fruits, healing leaves and bark for our ailments, food for our fires, wood for our houses and furniture. Neither do we have the old legends of

Father Christmas. The little Child is wonder enough, and the lovely stories of shepherds and wise men, of stars and little lamps, of angels, of the young Mother and her quiet wondering husband, of their journey to Bethlehem, of the inn, and the lighted city, all these are beauty and joy, colour and romance and rapture.

They come from far, year after year; the old climbing up the hill from the village with the aid of sticks, the young Africans, well-dressed, familiar with modern cinema films—they all come to the school village.

For the children it is their time of giving. One said to me, "On Christmas Eve we give our gift, on Christmas morning the Chief gives to us. I don't know which is better, they are both so good." It is a gracious and lovely gift of worship they give. All the reverence and courtesy, the childlikeness, the gay-hearted simplicity, the unquestioning faith of Africa are seen here, untouched and unspoiled, enshrined in one act.

The bell that Christmas Eve softly called the vast audience to silence. Sweet soft voices from afar sang of wonder and joy, and from the darkness came the swaying bodies of the children who are called the "baby angels." They came, all white and gold, carrying little swinging coloured lanterns that looked like glowing flowers. There was no sound but the far-off quiet singing, and the tiny bell-hung feet beating out a dance to the music of the carol.

The chief sat forward and transfixed. Not a breath broke the silence as the children drew near to the nsaka and danced round to that far-off sweet hymning. The chief, who wore innumerable bells on his ankles, set his feet firmly so that no sound from him should mar the music of the bells on the dancing feet.

Six tall angels drew near, holding aloft lamps like stars—they all gathered round the sleeping Babe and sang a little lullaby. They withdrew, moving to the rhythm of the hidden choir.

A woman sitting in the nsaka came forward and lifted the Babe from the manger and gave Him into the arms of the Mother. Joseph, the guardian of the little fire, was a man in a dream because of this thing which had come to pass. The mother was Nellie Musonda, that year, and the Babe, her little month-old son.

The shepherds from their sheep and watch-fires and angel visitants; the kings with their gifts from the East where the star beckoned; the children with their flowers; the world's seekers after God: all, in their turn, came to the Bethlehem in our midst. And then the long procession of every man, kings and shepherds, high and low, wise and ignorant, the very old and the very young, and with them the angels representing the unseen spirit world, all with little star lamps encompassed the nsaka, and kneeling, put their lamps down, thus encircling it with light. There they sang the great hymn of the Christian Church, "O Come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant."

As they sang the last verse, "Yea, Lord, we greet Thee," they knelt and greeted Him in their own beautiful way. With them, many in the audience bent forward to give their greeting. They rose and moved slowly away, a pageant of light and colour and music. At the far end of the courtyard they formed a cross, raised their lamps and sang, "Jesu, Word of God incarnate." Then it seemed to us that worship was too deep for words or action—the voices rang out through the clear still night, and sank into mystery and silence.

Again the movement; the children took their places all round the big enclosure, lighting it up with their lamps. A knight, symbolic of the young Christian Church, moved into the centre. He wore the gleaming helmet of salvation, carried the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit. He came robed in black and gold, led and followed by the spirits of light, those who for ever attend him on his perilous pilgrimage through the world.

He came to the Baby Chief to make his vows, and as he knelt there, someone sang, "There was a Knight of Bethlehem." Again the procession formed, and they went back, singing the last carol. The little angels who surrounded the Mother and her Child led her out and danced around her. It is said that the African women, though graceful walkers, are unable to dance with grace. The children on Christmas Eve are as little bits of thistledown floating around. Africa can give grace and beauty where she gives reverence and love.

A European onlooker said to me one night, "How do you do

it?" Our answer was, "We don't, the children do it." It is their own gift, much of it their own interpretation. There are rarely more than three rehearsals, there is very little stage management, and the children carry the whole thing through. Before each movement or scene Chungu reads from the New Testament of the shepherds, the wise men, the Chief's call to the children, of the "Light that lighteth every man," of the procession from the east and the west, of the Christian warrior, of the one Chief and the one Tribe, and she closes with prayer.

The audience sat that night as if loath to go—then it moved, rose, stretched itself, and began to stream towards the gates. It was quiet and orderly in spite of Chief Kasembe's presence. He waited for me.

"It is good, good, good, and these children who do it, all white and clean, are they ours? Are they the children of my kingdom?"

"Chief, they, with you, are the children of a Kingdom vaster than life and death."

"Yes," he said thoughtfully—thanked me, and moved off.

The drums were not beaten—only a little song accompanied him on his way to the village.

Nelson Chakota, one of our evangelists, stopped behind to say thank you. "We always say this night that these white-clad children who do these wonders and sing these songs cannot be ours; we sit in wonder."

He looked towards the nsaka.

"Salvation came through a little Child, may it not come to us through these, our children?" It reminded me of something Rebecca had said in prayer. "Of old they said a child shall lead and save them. Here are our children, O Chief, gathered in this place, and they are beginning to lead us."

But I had to leave the slowly dispersing audience and go into school. The children were sitting waiting. The noise of the crowd had not disturbed their calm; the last little act had to come. Together we asked the Chief to accept our gift and to bless us.

They rose from their knees, and the tongues were loosed.

"Was it good, Mama?"

"And the singing—did we go flat?"

Who had words to answer such questioning when our hearts had been stirred to the depths by the sheer beauty of it all?

Carols in Africa

¶ It is Christmas night in Africa. The African moon hangs heavy in the tropical sky as the Christians gather to see the pageant. No building can hold them all, so the porch of the school building is used for a stage, and the audience sits under the open sky. Tonight the students portray the birth of the Christ Child. Behind them flows the slow-moving river. Such scenes are alien to its jungle shores.

Mary's simple home is shown. African water jugs contribute to a realistic scene while Kwapchi, as Mary, receives Risku as Gabriel. Now the twelve shepherds, dressed in long blankets and carrying shepherds' crooks, sit about a real campfire watching their flocks, in reality the goats of the mission station. As they sing The Lord Is My Shepherd in their native tongue, Gabriel and his angels appear with the good tidings. Black angels, a black Gabriel, yes —but who told us that all the angels were white?

King Herod in all his oriental splendor could not be more kingly than Dika, the head hospital lad, as he plays the part. The African audience in hushed awe thrills to the scene of the three wise men as they ask for the new king of the Jews who is to be born in Bethlehem. Rich African voices harmonize the beautiful Christmas carols O Little Town of Bethlehem, and Holy Night.

Mary and Joseph are in the stable. Kwapchi and her husband, Shellon, gaze in adoration at the manger before them. Now come the eager shepherds and the dusky wise men with their gifts to the Christ Child. As they lay them at the foot of the rude manger crib, the entire audience, singing with the cast Joy to the World, brings its gifts. And in hushed reverence Balang offers a prayer of thanksgiving for the greatest of all gifts, He who was sent that all—black, white, brown, red and yellow—might have abundant life.

CHAPTER VIII

OCCASIONAL SERVICES OF WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS

A Community Good Friday Service
A Week's Program of Daily Worship
A Preparatory Service for Baptism
A Candlelight Communion Service
An Indian Christian Wedding
Baptism in Assam
The Christian and the Church

A Community Good Friday Service

This service was prepared and led by the Rev. Loren W. Burch, in an American rural community, New Haven, N. Y.

Organ Prelude: Passion Medley

*Call to Worship**

*Invocation**

*The Lord's Prayer**

Violin Solo: A Ballad of Trees and the Master

Responsive Reading

Duet: The Old Rugged Cross

A Moment of Silence

LITANY OF ADORATION* (*Responsive*)

Leader: When we consider Jesus Christ, who, when crucified by sinful and lawless men, condemned them not, but rather cried out, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do;

Response: We praise Thy Name, O Lord.

Leader: When we consider His mercy toward a dying thief, so that He said, Verily I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise;

Response: We praise Thy Name, O Lord.

Leader: When we consider His tenderness toward His mother and that disciple whom He loved, and how He said, Woman behold thy Son, and, Son behold Thy mother;

Response: We praise Thy Name, O Lord.

Leader: When we consider the depth of His sorrow, so that He cried out, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?

Response: We praise Thy Name, O Lord.

* Congregation standing.

Leader: When we consider the intensity of His suffering so that He cried out, I thirst;
Response: We praise Thy Name, O Lord.
Leader: When we consider the great things accomplished by His life and death, and that He said, It is finished;
Response: We praise Thy Name, O Lord.
Leader: When we consider His sublime faith, so that in the hour of death He said, Father into Thy hands I commend My spirit;
Response: We praise Thy Name, O Lord. *Amen.*

*The Doxology**

Prayer

*Hymn:** Beneath the Cross of Jesus

Sermon: The Glory of the Cross

*Hymn:** When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Benediction

Postlude

A Week's Program of Daily Worship

Community Service in the Witness of the Church

These worship plans were followed by rural churches in Western India in preparation for evangelistic witnessing. They are a part of a Gujarati book of worship for rural churches prepared for a three-month period, by the students and faculty of the Rural Church School, Vyara, Surat District, India.

Daily Readings:

MONDAY—Luke 10: 25–37. The Perfect Pattern of Service
TUESDAY—Mark 10: 32–45. The Grace of Christian Social Service
WEDNESDAY—Luke 4: 16–21. Service, the Ideal of Jesus

* Congregation standing.

THURSDAY—Acts 9: 32–43. Dorcas—A Woman Who Served the Community

FRIDAY—Acts 4: 31–37. Spirit of Service in the Early Church

SATURDAY—Matthew 25: 31–46. The Results of True Service

To Be Memorized: Mark 10: 44

For Meditation:

1. Christian Service is the true fruit of religion. If we do not serve, our religion is shown to be futile and insincere. The story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) teaches us that religion must issue in service.

2. Whom shall we serve, and how? See Luke 4: 16–21. The true joy of Christian living is found in serving all—the poor, the prisoners, the blind, the sick, the children—all who are in need.

3. What can Christian rural folk do about these problems?
   a. Poverty
   b. Malaria and other epidemic diseases
   c. Illiteracy
   d. Use of liquor and other drugs

4. There is only one permanent and effective remedy for these evils, and that is the impact of the Gospel.

5. As a Christian, is it not your responsibility to keep your home, your street, your village clean and beautiful? If right where you live old superstitions, old and harmful customs, and sorcery pass away, and give place to cleanliness, light, beauty, and love, then your service can be said to be real.

Hymn to Be Sung

Thanksgiving:

Let us give thanks for Christian Institutions—schools, dispensaries, centers of rural reconstruction, homes for widows and orphans, and all places where the light of Christian service shines.

Let us give thanks for all who have been drawn to Christ through such service.

Prayer and Intercession:

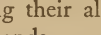
Let us pray—

That the Kingdom of God may come on earth and in our homes as it is in Heaven.

That through the unselfish service of our doctors, nurses, and hospitals, many people may be brought to Christ.

For those who are giving their all in the rural reconstruction of India and other lands.

For all institutions of social service run by the Christian Church.



A Preparatory Service for Baptism

This preparatory service for baptism is from *God's Candlelights,* by MABEL SHAW, pp. 90-91.[1] It is a service designed to make baptism for the African girls as real and vital an experience as tribal initiation. It is from Northern Rhodesia.

¶ The Baptismal Sunday came. The chapel service at dawn was one of preparation. After the opening praise and worship the girls came forward and knelt on the step before the apse. I told the children of the knights of old who pledged themselves to their chief, and of the Bakalume ba mfumu of their own land who lived near their chief to do his bidding. That to which our girls were giving themselves that day was the final act of initiation. They gave themselves to the Chief in the great congregation, and He, with all His people, the quick and the dead, received them. It was for them to guard the Tribe's law and tradition, to obey their Chief's behest, to eat of the Chief's food, and be His good tribesmen forever. I talked of signs and symbols well known to them, and then of the water in baptism, the symbol of initiation and cleansing. It is water that cleanses us day by day, and only the clean-hearted can stand before the Chief.

They all stood. I said: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

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1 Used by permission of the publisher, The Friendship Press, New York.

Again they knelt, and I asked them: Whose people are you?
We are the people of the Chief.

What is the Chief's name?
It is the Chief Jesus Christ.

What is the law of His Kingdom?
It is the law of love.

To what does He call you?
To obedience, to love and to service.

What are the bounds of His Kingdom?
His Kingdom has no bounds, it is everywhere and forever.

Then they rose and said: We are the people of the Chief through all days of our life, and through death we pass into His presence, and join the Tribe triumphant.

We then sang a hymn of praise to the Chief.

Later on they went to the Church in white dresses, and with others were baptized. At the end of the day they spent a little time in the chapel alone.

A Candlelight Communion Service

This service was prepared by Rev. James D. Wyker, for his rural community church in North Jackson, Ohio.

Hymns: (seated and unannounced)

ANTIPHONAL READING

Persons on the east: Let us sit quietly and leave the door ajar, for God.

Persons on the west: Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near.

East: Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?

West: He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.

East: Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

West: What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Special Music: Jesus Calls Us

Readers—Lessons in Purity and Self-Control:

1. I must live in the world. What shall I do about worldliness? Ephesians 4: 17; 5: 16, 17; 4: 27. Phil. 3: 18, 19.
2. What are the ultimate consequences if I keep on sinning? Ephesians 4: 19. Gal. 5:19–21.
3. I find it so easy to be self complacent and slothful. Romans 14: 7, 13, 16, 19.
4. Now that I am converted, what? Ephesians 4: 22, 23, 31, 32.
5. Would that my testimony might compare to that of St. Paul to the Corinthians. II Cor. 4: 11–13.

Hymn: The Height and Depth of Divine Love

What the Lord's Supper Means to Me

Meditation and Silence: Preparing myself for communion

Prayer for a Right Mental Attitude—

Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.

Out of the heart cometh the issues of life.

Help me to open wide the inner doors of my soul, tonight before Thee alone.

Prayer for a right attitude toward others—

All we like sheep have gone astray.

We have left undone those things which we ought to have done.

Withhold me from this table, my Lord, so long as I harbor any sin such as jealousy, hatred, greed, falsehood.

I pledge myself to reconcile that particular wrong in my life.

Prayer for Peace and Quiet—

I am meek and lowly of heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Let me relax—and relinquish petty purposes.
I was made to enjoy God, and to glorify Him.
Let me sacrifice myself, completely, as Jesus did.

The Holy Communion at the Altar: (groups of about 15 come by the center aisle, return by outer)

Parting Hymn: In the Cross of Christ

Benediction

An Indian Christian Wedding

In this account of a wedding in Tinnevelly, South India, the ritual is surrounded by many distinctly Indian features which make it peculiarly attractive. The description is taken from *Worship in Other Lands,* by H. P. THOMPSON, (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, London) and is quoted by permission of the publisher.

Following it is an account of a wedding at Kolhapur, India, used by permission from the same source.

¶ All the preliminaries so necessary to a wedding in South India have been carried through, the future fathers- and mothers-in-law are all satisfied, and all that now remains is to begin the final arrangements for the marriage, which will take place from the bride's house. The first step is to build the marriage pandal (an open-air booth), for apart from the many guests there will be also the poor to be fed. The help of the priest is sought, and he must proceed to the house and plant the first upright to form the pandal. This is usually in the village street. When the hole is ready to receive the pole, the members of the family gather round, and after extempore prayer the post is planted, and is then smeared by the priest with the sign of the cross in sandal-wood paste.

On the day of the wedding, as the bride is being dressed, her friends and female relatives sit round and sing sacred songs, wishing her every blessing.

Again after the service in church all gather in the pandal, and while lyrics are sung flower petals are thrown towards the bridal couple. It is a gesture of wishing the same blessings upon all if the bride and bridegroom throw back a few of the petals.

After an exchange of garlands between bride and bridegroom, silence is kept, while first one and then another offers prayers to God, all concluded by the priest pronouncing the blessing.

¶ The day before the wedding the bride is given a bath in which turmeric powder has been sprinkled, and eight or more green glass bangles are bought and placed on both arms.

Early the next morning the bride's girl friends again assist her to have a bath, while the husband's friends in his house are doing the same thing for him. Then the husband's people bring the wedding clothes for the girl, a blessing is asked on the clothes, and the girl is dressed by her friends. The husband has put on his new clothes, and both parties now come to the church for the wedding ceremony.

After the service the bride and bridegroom are garlanded by their friends, and after receiving congratulations the combined parties now go to the husband's house. Here the house has been decorated with mangotree branches and leaves of the banana palm (emblems of fruitfulness). The husband and wife sit on a mat in the centre of the room, and their friends in turn come up and bring their wedding presents, and lay them in front of the newly married couple. These gifts are usually household pots and pans and clothing.

On this day the usual curries are not eaten, only sweet things. At the meal the husband must first take a little rice in his hand and feed his bride, and she must then do the same for him. There is usually a good deal of happy laughter over this part of the proceedings, as both the husband and wife are terribly shy of each other.

There is still another ordeal before them, and that is the ceremony of using in public for the first and last time their Christian names. It is not considered polite for a husband or wife ever to

use each other's name. Either each speaks of the other as "they" or "my master" or "my family," or employs a pet name. But on this occasion the husband makes a little sentence bringing in his wife's name, and she must do the same with her husband's name.

A padre usually attends the feast, and after prayer and a little singing he gives a short address to the newly married couple, and then, before the friends disperse, the gifts of the husband to the girl's parents are received, whilst the girl's parents in their turn give to the husband a new suit, and to the girl two saris, bedding, and household cooking pots and a water-jar.

Amongst the gifts by friends to the bride and bridegroom are always two coconuts and five bananas and a little rice, indicating the wish of their friends that they may have a large family and health and prosperity.

Baptism in Assam

An example of baptism in which the ancient sacrament is well adapted to the culture of the people is this account from *Worship in Other Lands,* by H. P. Thompson. Used by permission of the publishers, The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, London.

¶ There were some twenty-five candidates in all, ranging from a man with grey hair, a father of a family, to an infant only a few days old. For the first part of the service they were lined up outside the west door of the church, with a very large congregation overflowing into the road. Then from the padre's house the cross-bearer and priest with two assistant ministers arrived. The first part of the service was taken—the prayers, the Gospel, and the Thanksgiving. Then for the promise the candidates were bidden to turn to the west, the direction of the setting sun, the end of the day being symbolic of the end of the old life of sin, which by their promise they now renounce. Then for the other promises they turned to the east, the direction of the rising sun, the beginning of the new day symbolizing the beginning of a new life in the faith of Jesus.

The procession was then marshalled to go to the river. First a cross-bearer followed by five drummers, then the congregation, each with flags or palms or flowers. Then the second cross-bearer flanked by palm-bearers followed by the clergy, then lastly the third cross-bearer leading the candidates. These are dressed in their oldest clothes, arrangements having been made at the river-side with screens and attendants, men and women, who bring the new clothes.

The procession advanced to the river singing Mundari bhajans,[1] led by the drums. As they progressed, as on the first Palm Sunday, the people climbed the trees and cut down branches to carry along the road. Arriving at the river the first cross-bearer led the congregation on to a bridge and to the opposite side of the river. Then the second cross-bearer led the clergy and candidates to the place arranged for the ceremony. The priest, Paulus, then entered the river and said the prayer of blessing of the water, signing with the sign of the cross. After this the whole congregation sang the hymn In Token That Thou Shalt Not Fear Christ Crucified to Own.

Then the first candidate came down to the river's edge, and entering the water he was immersed three times at the three-fold name of the Trinity. He then returned to the attendants and received his new clothing. When all had been baptized, the procession was marshalled for the return journey. It is the custom that this time the candidates lead the way and the congregation follow. Returning to the church, they stood in a line outside the west door to receive the sign of the cross; We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock and do sign him with the sign of the cross in token. . . .

This ended, a catechist led them to the church door where, on entering, each received a lighted candle, this symbolizing that Christ is the Light of the world, His word a lantern to guide our feet on the road of the new life.

Then followed the final thanksgiving, all standing, before the sanctuary, and the exhortation from the padre that each will walk worthy of the life begun and the promises made that day.

1 Spirituals.

The Christian and the Church

This is one of a series of worship services used in the Rural Institute, at Hsia Shuang Keng, China, in 1940.

Call to Worship

Song: (Audience)

Silence

Leader: Psalms 122: 1; 95: 1, 2; 84: 1, 2a

Song: I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord

Prayer: (Leader)

Responsive Scripture: Psalm 84

Gloria

Scripture: Ephesians 3: 14–21 (designated person)

Song: Church of China, Arise and Stand[1]

Silent Prayer: Praying especially that we as members of the Chinese church shall be faithful and strong, a help and not a hindrance, a light revealing the power of Christ in His Church, a living, serving, member of His Church, willing to sacrifice for the church and our fellowmen, our fellow Christians. This silent prayer followed by audible prayer by some member of the group asked previously or by the leader.

Benediction: Ephesians 3: 20, 21 (leader)

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1 Not in English, but a powerful song—a real marching song for the church in China.

CHAPTER IX

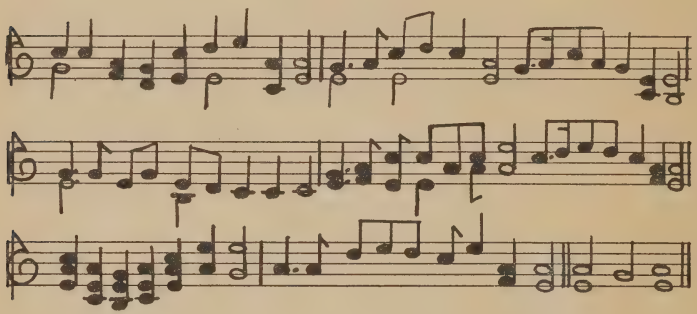
HYMNS OF THE RURAL CHURCH

Lord, for Thy Revealing Gifts
Great Are Thy Mercies
Dakota Hymn (Lacquiparle)
Rural Hymns from Africa
Hymn to be Used at Seed Consecration Service
For Home or Church Building Consecration
Harvest Festival Worship Service
Prayer Hymn for Rain
Adventures in Music for African Worship
Men of the Soil

There is an increasing number of hymns which have grown out of the country churches around the world, some of them of singular beauty and richness. In the few which are given here, there are representatives of several lands. Those hymns which are customarily sung to well-known western tunes have the tune indicated by name.

Lord, for Thy Revealing Gifts

¶ This lovely nature hymn is Chinese in form and content. It is taken from *Hymns of Universal Praise,* edited by Bliss Wiant, and is used by his permission.



Tzu jan fu yu hua t'u seh,
Na - ture is full of col - or
Ling hsing hua k'ai shih jen - pi,
Flow'ring from the ar - tis-tic heart;

T'ien chen liu lu yueh yin chung,
Na - ture gives a mus - ic sweet,
Shen ch'i shih chien hsin yi - shu,
That re-veals a Fa - ther's art;

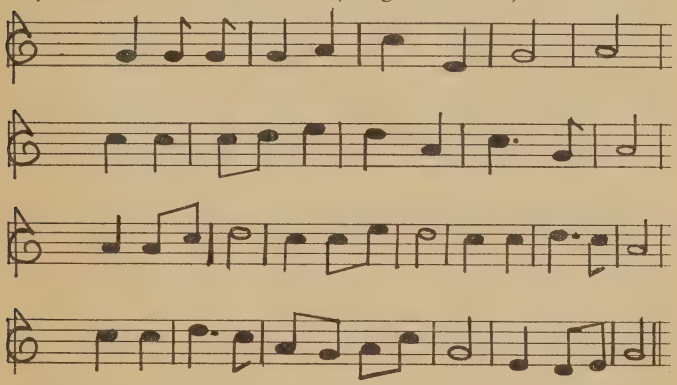
ching ying ts'an tan shih chiuen,
He with care con-trives them all,
Wan hsiang yin jen chien chen shih.
Thus per-ceived we know in part. *Amen.*

Great Are Thy Mercies

¶ The tune of this hymn comes from a Chinese Folk-Song, entitled, *Song of the Hoe*. It was first used as a Christian hymn in 1931, in a book consisting entirely of Chinese tunes and original hymns by Dean T. C. Chao, Yenching University School of Religion. It was subsequently used in *Hymns of Universal Praise,* a union hymnal used by almost all churches in China today. The music was edited and the English translation done by Bliss Wiant, through whose courtesy it is here used.

Dr. Chao wished to breathe a Christian spirit into the secular words, and did it very well indeed. The last line is especially beautiful. The literal translation of it is, God is the spring wind; I am grass: Let Him blow!

Key—C. Tune: Ch'u T'ou Ke (Song of the Hoe)



Great are thy mercies, Heavenly Father;
T'ien shang ti fu ch'in Ta sse pei ya;

All our food and shel-ter thou dost give.
Shang wo ch'ih ch'uan yang yang tou ch'uan pei.

Serving Thee, Ev'-ry day, Humbly would I live.
Wo ting yao Fu ts'ung ta, Hsiang t'a hsing Chi'en pei.

I'm a ten-der blade of grass — Breathe on me.
T'a shih ch'un feng, wo shih ts'ao — Jang t'a ch'uei.

Dakota Hymn (Lacquiparle)

Paraphrased by PHILIP FRAZIER of the Dakotas

Man - y and great, O God, are Thy things, Mak - er of
Grant un - to us com - mun - ion with Thee, Thou star - a-
earth and sky. Thy hands have set the heav - ens with stars,
bid - ing One; Come un - to us and dwell with us,
Thy fin - gers spread the moun - tains and plains. Lo, at thy
With Thee are found the gifts of life. Bless us with
word the wa - ters were formed, Deep seas o - bey Thy voice.
life that has no end, E - ter-nal life with Thee.

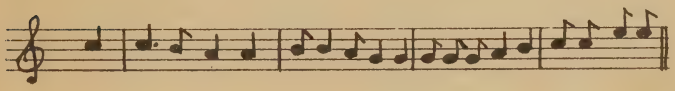
Rural Hymns from Africa

¶ These hymns are among the best examples of real rural Christian folk songs which have come out of the developing consciousness of worship in more primitive peoples. They were collected and sent by Rev. Julian S. Rea, of Kambini, P. E. Africa, where they had their origin. They were first published in English as a mimeograph bulletin by Agricultural Missions, Inc.

Hymn to be Used at Seed Consecration Service

Leader: Seed we bring
All: Lord, to Thee, wilt Thou bless them, O Lord!
Leader: Gardens we bring
All: Lord, to Thee, wilt Thou bless them, O Lord!
Leader: Hoes we bring
All: Lord, to Thee, etc.
Leader: Hands we bring
All: Lord, to Thee, etc.
Leader: Ourselves we bring
All: Lord, to Thee, etc.

¶ Leader may put in as many verses as he likes, using such words as knives, hoes, seed, etc. As each particular article or some special seed is mentioned, it is held up. The following tune is used:



Tim-be-wu ha ne-ha Hosi ka we-na nga u hi ka-te-ki-so Ho-si
Our seed we bring Lord to thee May you bless it, Lord

Leader All

Hymn used at Both Seed Consecration and Harvest Festival Time

Leader: The man who works — *All:* He it is who rejoices greatly
Leader: The man who digs — *All:* He it is who rejoices greatly
Leader: The man who plants — *All:* He it is who rejoices greatly
Leader: The man who harvests — *All:* He it is who rejoices greatly
etc., etc., etc.

(Our hymnal has 36 suggestions for verses. This is sung to a simple Tswa refrain of 17 notes.)

For Home or Church Building Consecration

Leader: Lord, we thank Thee this day.
All: We thank Thee, Lord. (Response after each line)
Leader: Thou who art source of all strength.
Leader: You caused us to build this building.
Leader: Lord, we thank Thee because of the carriers.
Leader: You helped us cut the trees.
Leader: We thank Thee for the building.
Leader: In this house we will remember Thee.
Leader: In this house we will worship Thee.

(Many other verses may be improvised to suit the occasion.)

Harvest Festival Worship Service

NOTE: All this type of song originated because of our first efforts in connection with that service ten years ago.

1.
Leader: On this day
Women: Amen, we are glad (sung jointly as
Men: We give thanks, deeply response)
Leader: We thank the Lord
Women: Amen, we are glad (sung jointly as
Men: We give thanks, deeply response)

Leader: Who has helped us
Leader: That we have health
Leader: That we dig our gardens
Leader: To cause rain
etc.
Leader: That we reap a rich harvest
etc.
etc.

(Refrain as before)

2.

Leader:
We thank Thee, Lord
We have lived another year
You blessed us greatly
With sun and rain
We thank Thee with seed
We thank Thee with corn
etc., etc., etc.
Lord, receive us
We will serve Thee
All through our lives

All:
We thank Thee, Lord
We have lived another year
You blessed us greatly
With sun and rain
We thank Thee with seed
We thank Thee with corn
etc., etc., etc.
Lord, receive us
We will serve Thee
All through our lives

Chorus: We give thanks, we give thanks

Prayer Hymn for Rain

Lord, this famine!
Lord, we lack
Food to feed our bodies.

REFRAIN:

Men in Unison: Send the rains!

All: Send the rains! Send the rains!
They will make soft the earth, our soil.

Drought defeats us.
Rain goes to one side.
We are left in famine! REFRAIN:

The cattle they groan.
Children they cry.
They lack food. REFRAIN:

Lord, heed
Come and help us.
Help us in this death! REFRAIN:

Note: This is used with a simple African tune and originated at the boys' school.

Adventures in Music for African Worship

This note on African music by EPHRAIM AMU is included in this book because it is the statement of an African who sees the beauty and value of the music of his people when used in the Christian church.

¶ When Christianity was introduced into Africa, European hymns were translated into a number of African languages and taught to the Christians. There appear to be two possible reasons why the missionaries took this course. First, that, because of insufficient insight, African airs appeared to the missionaries as unsuitable for Christian purposes; and, second, that the difference between African music and European music is so great that the study of African music, which is still no easy task for the professional European musician, was an almost impossible task for the missionaries.

The following are some of the describable differences between African and European singing:

The basic rhythm of African music is a regular alternation of double and triple effect.

Speech intonation is very closely observed in singing, and any disregard of it is in the majority of cases likely to make the words suggest an entirely different meaning from the one they were originally meant to convey.

The most important form of singing that obtains in Africa is

the solo and chorus form, in which the soloist improvises the words.

Singing in parts is more the rule than the exception. In the main it is two-part singing, the parts moving in parallel thirds intercepted here and there by a fourth or fifth.

What is indescribable is the spirit in which the singers sing and the spontaneity of self-expression, both of which make for the ultimate effect of African singing. In view of the differences referred to, European hymn singing is to the African, be he literate or illiterate, rather dull. To say, however, that European hymn singing should therefore be abandoned is to be unreasonable. On the other hand, if music is to be made to play in the life of African Christians the part it plays in the life of Africans in general, then the singing of African songs should be encouraged in the Church.

The right course to take in the further development of African music requires a very careful study by those Africans who are specially interested in their country's music. It is a matter of experimenting in different ways. However, this much can be said: that there does not seem to be the need for inventing a different musical notation from the current Western musical notation; that the study of the principles of Western music is as absolute a necessity as is the careful study of African music; that the right use of the principles of Western music in developing African music lies not in adoption but adaptation; and lastly, but most important of all, that in developing African music every effort should be made to retain its characteristic brevity and simplicity, both of which make for spontaneity of self-expression.

Men of the Soil[1]

Danish Folk Tune

By Harold Hildreth

Men of the soil! We have labored unending,
We have fed the world upon the grain that we have grown,
Now with the star of the new day ascending,
Giants of the earth, at last we rise to claim our own.
Justice thru-out the land, Happiness as God has planned,
Who is there denies our right to reap where we have sown?

Men of the soil! Now the torch we have lighted,
Kindles fire in every land where rings the harvest song!
Shoulder to shoulder in courage united
From every race we come to join the tillers' mighty throng.
Earth ne'er shall eat again Bread gain'd thru blood of men,
We have sworn to right forevermore the ancient wrong.

Men of the soil! We are coming in judgment,
To tell the world till justice rules there is no liberty,
We in our strength are arising as prophets,
Marching on to show the world the dawn that is to be.
There's a lightning in the sky, There's a thunder shouting high;
We will never stop until the sons of men are free.

A Prayer for Agriculture

Almighty God, who hast blessed the earth that it should be fruitful and bring forth abundantly whatsoever is needful for the life of man; prosper, we beseech Thee, the labours of the husbandman, and grant such seasonable weather that we may gather in the fruits of the earth, and proclaim Thy great goodness with Thanksgiving; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

—*The Book of Common Order* (Presbyterian)

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